






THE LIBRARY  
OF  
THE UNIVERSITY  
OF CALIFORNIA  
LOS ANGELES





BOOKS IN BOTTLES





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2008 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation

A NEW  
P R O J E C T  
FOR THE  
DESTRUCTION  
O F

Printing *and* Bookfelling ;

For the BENEFIT of the

L E A R N E D    W O R L D .

---

Præbet iter liquidum labenti in pectore voci.  
STRADA.

---

*Qui non credit,*  
Let Him read it.

---

L O N D O N :

*Printed from the Dublin Copy,*

And Sold by J. ROBERTS at the *Oxford Arms* in *Warwick-lane*.  
(Price Four Pence.)



# BOOKS IN BOTTLES

THE CURIOUS IN LITERATURE

BY

W. G. CLIFFORD



LINCOLN MACVEAGH  
THE DIAL PRESS  
NEW YORK

Made and Printed in Great Britain by Butler & Tanner Ltd., Frome and London

PL 511  
C. 61  
17-7

*Contents*

CHAP.		PAGE
I	IN WHICH THERE IS INDEED VERY LITTLE . . . . .	9
II	A GHOST OF A REFUSAL . . . . .	17
III	IN WHICH THERE IS TOO MUCH FOR THE BEST MAN AMONG US . . . . .	38
IV	WHICH MIGHT HAVE BEEN WRITTEN BEFORE . . . . .	48
V	A VINTAGE YEAR . . . . .	64
VI	IN WHICH WE DISPORT WITH AN ALEMBIC . . . . .	75
VII	WE BOTTLE THE NEWS OF THE WORLD . . . . .	89
VIII	AN ELIZABETHAN FLAGON . . . . .	104
IX	A BOTTLE OF BOOKSELLERS . . . . .	127
X	A BOTTLE AT THE CLUB . . . . .	148
XI	A BOTTLE TOO MUCH . . . . .	159
XII	A PARTING BOTTLE BETWEEN FRIENDS . . . . .	173



And for to pass the time, this book shall be pleasant to  
read in, but for to give faith and belief that all is true that  
is contained herein, ye be at your own liberty.

WILLIAM CAXTON.



BOOKS IN BOTTLES





## CHAPTER ONE

### *In Which There is Indeed Very Little*

**B**UYING old books at auction is rather like getting married : you are never sure that your treasure *is* a treasure until you get it home. Even then, years may pass before you know exactly what you possess, if ever you do. Time may reveal anything in either a wife or a library. Years ago, in a London auction room, I bought a parcel of old books, among which I found a nondescript volume labelled "Tracts." Glancing through it, I detected sermons, not those of Sterne, which any man may love, or those of Blair, which any man may read with profit before making his will. Instead, I saw sermons of average-parson-power ; those "laborious compositions of their own" ; sermons it was doubtless a duty to preach ; but best taken as read in print. There was also a sprinkling of "those stupid, at once stupid and malignant things, and roguish things, called religious tracts" ; tedious reading in this world, and yielding, to but cursory analysis, distinct traces of brimstone in the next. Helped by Foote, we see this matter more clearly. "When an attorney dies

in England," said he to the intelligent foreigner, "we lay him out in a room overnight by himself, lock the door, throw open the window, and in the morning, he's entirely off. Why, we cannot exactly tell, but there's a strong smell of sulphur in the room next morning."

My book, for all I cared, could have made off with itself in the same way, but it never did, much good as it might have done thereby. Valuing my friends, and having no enemies, I could not give it away; nor could I lose it by lending, with such a title. Had I been able, I would have burned the thing, but, as John Hill Burton observes: "Books are not good fuel. . . . In the days when heretical books were burned, it was necessary to place them on large wooden stages, and after all the pains taken to demolish them, considerable readable masses were sometimes found in the embers; whence it was supposed that the devil, conversant in fire and its effects, gave them his special protection. In the end it was found easier and cheaper to burn the heretics themselves than their books."

There was also that variation of combustion which burned a living heretic with his writings; and, more rarely, a dead one with his "little sacke full of bookes, which he had printed," as was done in Rome with the exhumed corpse of Spalato, "on the twentieth of this present moneth of December, 1624."

From this we see that, however the task is attempted, the ideal burning of books is a ceremonial of impressive detail, of elaboration which few laymen can hope to perfect to its final cinder. We now understand why discarded old books become almost a haunting possession. Even the dustbin seems squeamish of them. Paley was once returned to me by a grimy being, who, deluded by calf binding in fair state, championed the volume from the jaws of the destructor ; a well-intentioned service I had not the heart to ignore. Money, I felt, would be an insult. " My man," I said, " I see you know a good book when you see one. You may keep it for your honesty."

This struck me as one of the few really appropriate things I have done in life. It encouraged me to experiment further with an odd folio of Rapin, minus the plates, an item of impressive bulk, which I hoped my literary dustman would accept intuitively as a tactful gift, a presentation volume bestowed without ostentation, a second instalment of a library that was surely coming to him. He took it away, and was thoughtful enough to send me written acknowledgment,—a note from the borough surveyor informing me that " old books are not to be placed in the receptable provided for household refuse."

Thus warned, I had to devise some means of getting rid of books which were surplus, so it seemed, to

every requirement in the world, and denied even the common exit of the dust-shoot. To meet my need, I made a habit of keeping a condemned book handy on my desk, and tearing leaves out, when pipe-lighters or book-markers were in demand. So it happened that, in strict rotation after Tupper, my volume of tracts came up for its utility end. By degrees, I tore my way through rather more than half of it, when I was stopped by a title, which revealed such sympathetic coincidence with my task, that only a Moloch of literature, a rabid bibliolyte, could have lit his pipe with what it denoted. Here is the full title-page :

IN WHICH THERE IS INDEED VERY LITTLE

A NEW

P R O J E C T

F O R T H E

DESTRUCTION

O F

Printing *and* Bookfelling ;

For the BENEFIT of the

L E A R N E D W O R L D .

---

Præbet iter liquidum labenti in pectore voci.  
STRADA.

---

*Qui non credit,*  
Let Him read it.

---

L O N D O N ;

*Printed from the Dublin Copy,*

And Sold by J. ROBERTS at the *Oxford Arms* in *Warwick-lane*;  
(Price Four Pence.)

It has no date, but we may place it somewhere in the eighteenth century with large and unwavering confidence. At least, I hope so. It is certainly not earlier. I have never bothered the worthy experts at the British Museum to put a date on it ; they are not beholden to do so now, unasked, they or their like. It were a perfectly needless display of learning to prove me to be in the wrong century. I acquired the habit of this when at school, and have never lost it, much to my satisfaction.

The author of our old tract, whoever he may have been, is unknown to me. Some skirmishing pamphleteer, I suppose, who let fly his little squib at about the period when Swift was sending his political war-rockets soaring and banging aloft. There may be topical allusion in his tract, but I would not turn a page to find it. This, to my mind, is vastly more interesting. " Sounds are nothing else but Air put in Motion," says our author, " and striking the Organs of Hearing, which it happens to encounter in its way, before the Motion is spent. The Consideration hereof first made me inclinable to think that Air in Motion might be compressed, and consequently preserved as well as any Part of the Stagnant Atmosphere. The only Difficulty seemed to be finding out proper Vessels for retaining the sonorous Fluid, and afterwards discharging it with such different Degrees of Velocity, as might cause the same Un-

dulations upon the second Emission, as at the first."

That, even in satire, is wonderfully near the formless embryo of wireless. It is curious to find such an old shaft of fancy sticking near the gold on the target of modern invention. There is, however, nothing anticipative of technical infringement. In truth, if not in sober earnest, our author suggests that books might be barrelled and bottled off. He is persuaded that if books could be tackled with corkscrews, there would be greater call for them ; that a cellar of books would be more invitingly absorbable than a library. What a cellar choice and rare this would give to :—

. . . the Athenæum club, so wise, there's not a man of it  
That has not sense enough for six (in fact, that is the plan of it :)  
The very waiters answer you with eloquence Socratical,  
And always place the knives and forks in order mathematical.

There, not unfittingly, we may envisage Mr. Birrell sipping his 1791 Boswell, critically appreciative of the vintage edition, while younger members trifle with the club cocktail, a piquant mixture of *Punch* and the *War Cry*, blended from a recipe used in the family of a bishop for very many years.

Another prospect, not so delectable, is conjured up by our old pamphleteer. He can be read in a way which excites the disturbing surmise that words, trapped by machinery and ether-borne, may be

destined to supplant the printed page ; a thought we dare not disregard in the light of our later knowledge. Gazing into my crystal set, I see the beginning of the end of the world of books—I see a bookless old age marking the senile decay of the human race—I see the printing of books tumbled into the gulf of the lost arts, wirelessly away to the long last of oblivion.

There is only one thing I can do—be in time and write a book. Previously, when of the making of books there was no end, I demurred at meddling with the eternal. But now, sensing that I may pen a relic of the book age, there is incitement to the task. My book, having said its say and had its day, may be desirable to collectors among the posterity of Macaulay's New Zealander, who will know it as the work of one of the bookish who wrote away back in the twentieth century, and perchance allow that a copy is worth picking up, if in good condition and not too dear. It encourages me to reflect that the intrinsically inconsequential, some mere light chip of an Argosy, whittled idly with no thought for the morrow, may float on the ocean of time until, wrought by a sea-change "into something rich and strange," it is gathered up and treasured, as was our old tract. There is further encouragement in the thought that books in bottles ought to float, if not too heavy—I must see what I can bottle from my library.



## CHAPTER TWO

### *A Ghost of a Refusal*

JOHNSON observes that the characters of authors are not to be collected from their works : a dictum we may accept with gratitude, noting that " If the devil himself were to write a book, it would be in praise of virtue ; because the good would purchase it for use, and the bad for ostentation." Despite this, an unfinished work, an unsuspecting outline, an adumbration lacking bulk of words in which personality may be hid, must reveal as much of the character of an author as unadorned truth, naked of every literary artifice, may be allowed to display. Hence my regard for—*A Diary of a Journey into North Wales, in the year 1774* : by Samuel Johnson, LL.D., Edited, with illustrative notes, by R. Duppa, LL.B., Barrister at Law, London, 1816. So reads the title-page of my copy, and attendant circumstances do not discredit the book.

We know that, in 1774, Johnson journeyed into Wales with Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, and their daughter, the " Queenie " who was afterwards Lady Keith. Johnson was then sixty-four years of age, famous,

beloved, and as comfortably well-to-do as he ever wished to be. His mind, alert to the end on fresh projects, may well have had some leaning towards the production of a book on Wales; a companion volume to his *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, and to this end we may fairly conclude that he kept a rough journal during his holiday. It is enjoyable to accept his Welsh diary in this minor mood, perusing it as stray jottings, allowing it to contain sundry intimate touches between the lines; but always reading with the mental reservation that it is an impertinence to regard the book as the finished product of the mind of Johnson.

We must take it as he wrote it. Lowndes, with no feeling beyond that of a precise bibliographer, credits the book to Johnson in 1834. In quarters less disinterested, among those who claim editorial freehold in the ample manor of Johnson and his works, Duppa is thugged with that silence which is the deadliest of weed-killers in the garden of literature.

Having no proprietary interest in the matter, we have no bias to deter us from prying among discursive entries which are authentic, undoubted Johnson as far as they go, although no more designed for publication as written than was the cypher of Pepys—would that this diary was one hundredth part as self-revealing! It is not, but there are gleanings.

I am struck by an early entry, which notes, "Price

of 4 horses, 2s. a mile." From this I conjecture that Johnson's celebrated visit to Scotland was not altogether wasted upon him. The comment may belong to that decadent period when he began to save money; not much, not nearly enough to make us anxious for his fame, merely a careless accumulation; "considerably more than he had supposed it to be," says Boswell. Johnson died worth rather better than a couple of thousand pounds at the outside; the main concern displayed in his will is to provide handsomely for that negro servant whom Boswell is too priggish to depict, even as he is too abject in his toadyism to record the words of Burke, the one conversationalist worthy of the steel of his idol. And yet, confound him, the hours he has held me when I intended to spare no more than a minute to check a reference in his pages. Always, I wonder why, but 'tis so.

As the Literary Club subscribed eleven hundred guineas for his monument, Johnson, on balance, cannot be accused of saving more money than became his genius. The manner of his saving amounts to a brown study in finance, serenely oblivious to nice adjustment between what he had and what he owed. With a round thousand in three per cents, and odd hundreds stored in safe hands, it was not until he lay on his death-bed, with the mill of his memory grinding fine for the last time, that he recalled a matter of thirty pounds he had borrowed from

Reynolds away back in some passing phase of impecuniosity. Reynolds forgave the debt, promised to read his Bible every day, promised never to paint again on Sunday, would have promised anything to ease the death-pangs of the man he loved, as was but human, and good, being some comfort to the stepping into the dark ; with profound intellect fearful ; but with simple faith lit onward by the beam of his prayer, " receive me at my death to everlasting happiness, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen."

Such was the passing of Johnson, after a life of work so varied that even the myriad-minded Shakespeare suffers no indignity by comparison of scope—let the manner rest. " Poverty was long his portion," says Birrell ; " not that genteel poverty that is sometimes behindhand with its rent, but that hungry poverty which does not know where to look for its dinner." This goes too far, exceeding even the permissible limit of the figurative. Johnson, when normal, would have clucked at it, with impatient " *too, too, too.*" You must not tell me, these many years a masterless man in the world of words, that my grand old captain of highly disorganized freelancers, who battled through a dictionary with but a corporal's squad in support, lacked wit to earn a dinner. That amounts to a charge of unprofessional conduct. That Johnson was poor for the greater

part of his life follows naturally from the eminence of his literary genius ; but that he was downright *hungry* in his poverty is another and a vastly different thing. It signifies the last crash of social shipwreck ; that shivering plunge into the depths of the submerged ; that bitter choice between begging for a meal or the biting of crude arsenic, as did Chatterton. Johnson never sank to this. He was gifted enough to have done so, but the pedigree of his genius was somewhere crossed with a working hack, and that kept him from sheer hunger ; an ugly thing, not to be written about lightly, and so far from the life of Johnson that he was never so much as arrested for debt. It is the one tribute to his greatness that we miss in his career.

Depend on it, at any nadir of his ready cash, when "something on account" eluded even his practised palm ; when "Mr. Cave laid down 2s. 6d.," having passed his limit of guineas on current payment for work in hand, Johnson knew where to find his dinner. We have the comfort of double assurance that such fleeting gaps were filled with substantial fare, with something even better than the rough plenty of bohemianism, taking that to equal a banquet brought home in the newspaper that paid for it. Johnson was ever above this, even as "hungry poverty" is below it. He was a more finished provider for his inner man, knowing "how he could live in the

cheapest manner," says Boswell ; and we have Johnson's own word to clinch it. " I dined very well for eight-pence," he says, " with very good company, at the Pine-Apple in New-street, just by. Several of them had travelled. They expected to meet every day ; but did not know one another's names. It used to cost the rest a shilling, for they drank wine ; but I had a cut of meat for sixpence, and bread for a penny, and gave the waiter a penny." If Johnson can be shown in " hungry poverty " beyond this, the sight will sadden me, coming with the shock of unwelcome surprise.

He suffered enough without denying him bread. On his birthday, he wrote to Mrs. Thrale. " I can now look back upon threescore and four years, in which little has been done, and little has been enjoyed ; a life diversified by misery, spent part in the sluggishness of penury, and part under the violence of pain, in gloomy discontent or importunate distress." Truly, he suffered, but most of all from that horrible hypochondria which makes his letter more a symptom of disease than evidence of biographical fact. " Importunate," the man who kicked patronage out of the world of letters ; spurning Chesterfield in a thud of words which live as the Magna Charta of the independence of literary genius ! " In misery," the most clubbable man in the annals of social intercourse ! What are we to take it to mean in plain matter-of-fact ? Is

it so very much more than an eloquent rendering of the woes of the old body "who enjoyed bad health" until past seventy? Johnson, be it remembered, was seventy-four when he died. That Thrale letter is no more to be taken literally than is Cromwell's fanatic confession. "You know what my manner of life hath bin; O, I lived in and loved darknesse and hated the light. I was a chief, the chief of sinners." It can but make us thankful that Johnson's tinge of melancholy never deepened to the dark hue of the intermittent dementia of Cowper, and that he never suffered as did Swift, who was so tortured that "during one week, it was with difficulty that five persons kept him, by mere force, from tearing out his own eyes." The worst we know of Johnson, bodily and mentally, is seen in his confession to Mr. Hector, his early friend. "From that kind of melancholy indisposition which I had when we lived together at Birmingham, I have never been free, but have always had it operating against my health and my life with more or less violence." True, and when he wrote of himself:—

To griefs congenial prone,  
 More wounds than Nature gave he knew,  
 While misery's form his fancy drew  
 In dark ideal hues and horrors not its own.

To return to Johnson, according to Duppa: "Talk

with Mistress about flattery," relates to a conversation with Mrs. Thrale, whose designation as "Mistress," ("always in a good sense," as Arber says,) is a pleasant touch in this diary. Johnson had a playful habit of thus sustaining imaginary relationships with his lady friends. Good son as he was to the mother that bore him, he obligingly allowed himself to be adopted after the grand manner of literary pretence. There is nothing better in all Boswell than his account of the circumstance; as related in his *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*,—"At Sir Alexander Dick's, from that absence of mind to which every man is at times subject, I told, in a blundering manner, Lady Eglintoune's complimentary adoption of Dr. Johnson as her son; for I unfortunately stated that her ladyship adopted him as her son, in consequence of her having been married the year *after* he was born. Dr. Johnson instantly corrected me. 'Sir, don't you perceive that you are defaming the countess? For, supposing me to be her son, and that she was not married till the year after my birth, I must have been her *natural* son.' A young lady of quality, who was present, very handsomely said, 'Might not the son have justified the fault?' My friend was much flattered by this compliment, which he never forgot. When in more than ordinary spirits, and talking of his journey in Scotland, he has called to me, 'Boswell,



what was it the young lady of quality said of me at Sir Alexander Dick's ?' "

Small wonder that Johnson revelled in the memory of it. The compliment is a classic ; perhaps the wittiest, and, in a pawky sense, the greatest ever paid by woman to man, since Adam awoke to find that one of his ribs had changed into the better half of him. Shakespeare has to be quoted to return the compliment ; not so neatly, nor so wittily ; but with a sublimity of gallant flattery we might consider beyond words, did not words convey it. The passage, in which commentators allow Mary Queen of Scots to be the poetical mermaid, although Elizabeth may have fancied she was, is in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* :—

My gentle Puck, come hither ; Thou remember'st  
 Since once I sat upon a promontory,  
 And heard a mermaid, on a dolphin's back,  
 Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,  
 That the rude sea grew civil at her song ;  
 And certain stars shot madly from their spheres,  
 To hear the sea-maid's music.

In pleasant equity, Johnson has no right to figure in such transcendent bandying of compliments. He never laboured to say pretty things about the ladies, greeting them rather with the severe frown of the moralist, writing—“ We see every day women perish with infamy, by having been too willing to set their

beauty to shew ; and others, though not with equal guilt or misery, yet with very sharp remorse, languishing in decay, neglect, and obscurity, for having rated their youthful charms at too high a price." And, indeed, if the opinion of Bacon be thought to deserve much regard, very few sighs would be vented for eminent and superlative elegance of form ; "for beautiful women," says he, "are seldom of any great accomplishments, because they, for the most part, study behaviour rather than virtue."

Dismissing beauty with this frigid turn of his pen, Johnson makes but poor amends in his description of "a good sort of woman," merely allowing that, "Her house is elegant, and her table dainty, though she has little taste of elegance, and is wholly free from vicious luxury ; but she comforts herself that nobody can say that her house is dirty, or that her dishes are not well drest." In the heart of him, Johnson knew better than this placing of women among the plates and dishes. "Nature has given women so much power that the law has very wisely given them little," he wrote to Dr. Taylor ; a remark which conveys a feeling of respect almost amounting to fear.

As a son, Johnson knelt bareheaded at the shrine of motherhood all his born days. As a husband, he cherished his wife and admired her good sense, but inclined to that frequent type which is excep-

tionally fond when the anniversary of the wife's death comes round. Not that his married life was unhappy ; there were episodes, but nothing serious. We gather little more than "internal evidence" suggesting that his Tetty gave him wifely counsel of unanswerable quality whenever she deemed it good for him ; in which connection we may perhaps allow autobiographical inspiration to this note in his *Idler*, "She once called me to supper when I was watching an eclipse, and summoned me at another time to bed when I was going to give directions at a fire." Can there be hint of Caudle here ? "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, sitting up half the night with your fusty old books, singeing your wig at the candle. What do *you* care if the house *is* burned down. When *are* you coming to bed, Mr. Johnson ?"

Whereat, like the good husband he really was, Johnson shut his book and lumbered off up to bed, thankful if Tetty said no more, feeling that all the words he knew, and all his command of them, were unequal to the dialogue of the moment. His tongue could be crushing in another domestic establishment, as we see by his speech to the lady of a house where he was about to sup. "I, madam, who live at a variety of good tables, am a much better judge of cookery, than any person who has a very tolerable cook, but lives much at home ; for his palate is generally adapted to the taste of his cook ; whereas,

madam, in trying by a wider range, I can more exquisitely judge." By all the powers of matrimony, I pity him had he said half as much to his Tetty.

Apart from his writing, as a ladies' man in being, Johnson cuts a queer sort of detached figure in the fascinating company of Madame de Boufflers. Horace Walpole says of this lady—"She is very sensible, and has a measured eloquence that is just and pleasing, but all is spoiled by an unrelaxed attention to applause; you would think she was always sitting for her picture to her biographer." She was the mistress of the Prince de Conti, and is said to have been extremely anxious to be made his wife.

Coming over from Paris with a great reputation for wit, gallantry, and fashion, Madame de Boufflers desired to add to her charms by cultivating literature, and called on Johnson, then the literary lion of London. What happened is described by Topham Beauclerk—"I went with her to his chambers in the Temple, where she was entertained with his conversation for some time. When our visit was over, she and I left him, and were got into Inner Temple Lane, when all at once I heard a voice like thunder. This was occasioned by Johnson, who, it seems, upon a little reflection, had taken it into his head that he ought to have done the honours of his literary residence to a foreign lady of quality, and, eager to show himself a man of gallantry, was hurry-

ing down the staircase in violent agitation. He overtook us before we reached the Temple Gate, and, brushing in between me and Madame de Boufflers, seized her hand and conducted her to her coach. His dress was a rusty brown morning suit, a pair of old shoes by way of slippers, a little shrivelled wig on the top of his head, and the sleeves of his shirt and the knees of his breeches hanging loose. A considerable crowd of people gathered round, and were not a little struck at this singular appearance."

The surmise is impish, but I wonder whether Johnson displayed a measure of purposeful eccentricity in such odd behaviour? We know that he said, "Sir, if they should cease to talk of me I must starve."

We change the subject at Chatsworth, on the road to Wales, where Johnson made this curious note: "Atlas, fifteen hands inch and a half." Possibly, he may have entered this to remove any remaining doubt, by association of ideas, anent "pastern" as the "knee of a horse"; or it may have been that the figures attracted him. He loved to count and compute almost anything he could reduce to simple arithmetic, including the equine, a tendency which prompted him to note in the island of Barra "a breed of horses, of which the highest is not above thirty-six inches." He is reported to have said: "of all the duke's possessions, I like Atlas

best"; a singular appreciation of a good horse from one whose claim to an equestrian statue is distressingly slight, Boswell stating: "when he rode, he had no command or direction of his horse, but was carried as if in a balloon." This sheds a flood of light on an important event in the life of Johnson, which has hitherto baffled investigation. His marriage to a widow almost twice his age has never been properly understood until now. On the nuptial morn, Johnson and his lady rode to church on horseback, as must have been the designing wish of the bride-to-be. Once she cajoled him into the saddle, the rest was automatic, he was wafted to the altar "as if in a balloon." His own account of his boorish distancing of the lady in a mock heroic race: "till I was fairly out of sight," says he, may be dismissed as mere swagger; the common boast of a poor rider of great doings when nobody was looking. The basic fact of the whole business was feminine, and subtle enough to confirm the worst fears of the elder Weller.

Most probably, however, Johnson's interest in Atlas was etymological, inspired by thought of those Arabs "who call their thorough-bred horses, 'race horses,' or horses of a family, or 'race,' because they can trace their families or breeds as high as a Welsh pedigree." Come what may, we cannot write Johnson down as an interested racing man. His opinion

of racing displays the martinet style of moralising. To give narrative interest to his prosy lecture on the sport, he invents the character of Mr. Edward Scamper, a member of that club he created in his *Adventurer*, and left to show us that he could write in this vein with all the felicity of an Addison compiling a dictionary, a task the genius of the *Spectator* once contemplated, but mercifully relinquished. Scamper came to the sad end of every awful example, "his girth broke, his shoulder was dislocated, and before he was dismissed by the surgeon, two bailiffs fastened upon him, and he saw Newmarket no more." Truly, as a sporting writer, Johnson is not great; a platitude as bald as the end of his racing story.

To an extent, it is a pity that Johnson is not more read now-a-days. The magnificent roll of his sentences is often "as of thunder answering from two horizons." His mind has minted its share of the current coin of quotation—"Slow rises worth by poverty depressed"—"Superfluous lags the veteran on the stage"—"Panting time toiled after him in vain," and :—

He left the name, at which the world grew pale,  
To point a moral, or adorn a tale.

These surface gleanings serve to place Johnson among the rare ones who are quoted unconsciously. His complete works offer an abundance of material for a classic anthology. Here is proof, taken at

random :—“ The danger of such unbounded liberty, and the danger of bounding it, have produced a problem in the science of government which human understanding seems unable to solve.” That is as true in the days of the General Strike as it was in the time of the Grand Remonstrance. The hindrance to a revival of the best of Johnson is that Boswell has too much limelight to render such a work remunerative. By the time people have read Boswell, they feel they have munched the nutty kernel of Johnson, that what is left is but dry shell. This is not fair to Johnson as a literary force, but there must be some drawback when a man is the subject of the greatest biography in the language. Boswell always reminds me of the evergreen simile of a trailing mass of ivy spreading over the gnarled trunk and limbs of a massive old oak ; a striking and picturesque reminder of the tree, but sapping native strength, and hiding something better than itself beneath the enticing twining of its foliage.

Yet, sometimes, fond as I am of Johnson, I doubt whether my simile can be supported by fair criticism. Taking the average of his genius, Johnson wrote in a style which died soon after him, but spoke in a style which lives for ever. In much of his writing, chapters have slipped into oblivion for sentences that survive. In conversation, his every word leaps at you with the freshness of the last good thing you may have heard ;



and it was Boswell who saved the spoken treasure for us. How much of literary genius truly belongs to Johnson is a point to be thrashed out in a couple of volumes or so ; in brief, he gives himself his own place in literature, allowing us to judge by a comparison he invites. This is seen in his ending to *The Deserted Village*, in which "sweet poetry" is invoked to :—

Aid slighted truth, with thy persuasive strain !  
 Teach erring man to spurn the rage of gain !  
 Teach him that states, of native strength possessed,  
 Though very poor, may still be very blessed !  
 That trade's proud empire hastes to swift decay,  
 As ocean sweeps the laboured mole away ;  
 While self-dependent power can time defy,  
 As rocks resist the billows and the sky.

Goldsmith wrote the first four lines of this, ending his poem on the word "blessed." Johnson tacked on the four extra lines, and stands to be judged accordingly.

"On the table lay the Nuremberg chronicle, I think, of the first edition," says Johnson, writing of the library in the chapter house of Worcester Cathedral. Interesting, perhaps the only trace in Johnson of a collector's relish for first editions. Such treasures were scanty in his own library ; there being no anticipatory superlatives in "A catalogue of the valuable Library of Books of the late learned Samuel Johnson, Esq., LL.D., deceased, which will be sold

by auction (by Order of the Executors) by Mr. Christie, at his Great Room in Pall Mall, on Wednesday, February 16, 1785, and three following Days. To be viewed on Monday and Tuesday preceding the Sale, which will begin each Day at 12 o'clock. Catalogues may be had as above." There were 662 lots, of which 650 were books ; the twelve last lots were prints, mostly "framed and glazed." Boswell completes the story. "His library, though by no means handsome in its appearance, was sold by Mr. Christie, for two hundred and forty-seven pounds nine shillings ; many people being desirous to have a book which had belonged to Johnson. In many of them he had written little notes ; sometimes tender memorials to his departed wife ; as, "This was dear Tetty's book."

He bequeathed books to several friends (Boswell getting nothing !). Reynolds is most to be envied, his priceless legacy including "my own copy of my folio English Dictionary, of the last revision." Apart from such inestimable association values, the intrinsic prize seems to be "Beza's Greek Testament, by Stephens," presuming the copy to have been either the folio of 1550, or its immediate successor, *Ex Officina R. Stephani*, 1551, the first edition divided into verses. My Beza, a copy of the Greek and Latin edition of 1565, is divided in a manner worth noting. Away back in 1736, one John Bunce had the sacred volume broken up and interleaved with plain paper,

using the blank leaves as an exercise book in which to acquire Greek from the Latin after the manner of the great model before him. He persevered with amazing industry, writing on both sides of the paper in a hand of uniform neatness, and must have transcribed tens of thousands of words of Holy Writ in his unremitting toil for mastery of the Greek language. To his credit be it recorded that he worked with reverent neatness, leaving no blot or mark anywhere on the sacred page.

Another book of mine reminds me very much of Johnson. It is Salmon's *Geographical Grammar*, London, 1769, and is inscribed: "This book was had from Mr. Downes, instead of Pringle on the Diseases of the Army. I offered to take this book in exchange, which offer Mr. Downes never said whether he accepted or not. If, therefore, he should ever ask for this book, he must be desired to return Pringle—Memo, June 14, 1780. S.C." Whoever "S. C." may have been, his record of the book he lent has tenacity. Johnson would have found such an acquaintance a severe trial; as only De Quincey surpasses him as a literary borrower of books. He began in style, borrowing from Pembroke College the first book he ever needed to make another from—*A Voyage to Abyssinia*, by Lobo, a Portuguese Jesuit, which he translated at Birmingham in 1733, working with such indolence that—"He lay in bed with the

book, which was a quarto, before him, and dictated while Hector wrote."

Later in life, we find that he obtained a ticket for the reading room of the British Museum, but there is no record that he ever used it, having no great need for the catalogue; the immensity of his reading and the tenacity of his memory sufficing instead; and his disposition preferring to borrow books from friends rather than read under the least restriction, however necessary. Some idea of the range of his borrowing is indicated by the books he loaned from but one source, the library of the learned Dr. Birch. The dated list of his requests is revealing—"I am at a loss for the Lives and Characters of Earl Stanhope, the two Craggs, and the Minister Sunderland," 1748.—"I beg the favour that if you have any catalogue by you, such as the *Bibl. Thuaneana*, or other of value, that you will lend it for a few days," 1752.—"I beg the favour of you to lend me Blount's *Censura Scriptorum*," 1753.—"If you will be pleased to lend me Clarendon's History for a few days, it will be a favour" (no date).—"If you can lend me, for a few days, Wood's *Ath. Ox.* it will be a favour," 1755.—"I know you have been long a curious collector of books. If, therefore, you have any of the contemporaries or ancestors of Shakespeare, it will be of great use to lend me them for a short time," 1756.

More to the same effect can be quoted ; and the astounding thing is that Johnson, without even a Clarendon or a Wood under his own roof, wrote as he did, and wrote the half that he did. It is amazing, but, all the same, I would rather not have the ghost of him among my books. A refusal might offend, and a refusal would be necessary ; my library motto being that, in the borrowing of books, the lender does the sorrowing, a pang I avert by seldom or never lending any. But for this, believe me, my bottles would float away empty.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### *In Which There is Too Much for the Best Man Among Us*

THIS bottling of books, be the task right gallantly performed, must transmit to posterity such silhouette of lovely woman as may be traced from the cold black and white of print. The process reveals the limitations of literature. However fine your library, there is nothing in it that is quite like a woman. Not in what may be called the altogether complete. Here and there you will find fragments, which can be brought together to form a crude mosaic, a rough similitude of her outward and visible charms. More than that is beyond the pen of man to depict. The inner woman is too elusive for words, the mercury of creation, nigh as fickle as the lords of it, is this inward woman that men understand at twenty, only to learn at seventy, should they live so long, that what man does not know about woman is the lacuna of his life.

Pardon, ladies, what unavoidable concentration there must be on your mere exterior aspect ; so temptingly amenable to mortal depiction since the days of

the saga. Beautiful as it is, this is the least worthy of your own attention, never mind mine. As old Ben Jonson has it—"A woman, the more curious she is about her face, is commonly the more careless about her home." That is of purely historical interest, referring to women who have been dead these hundreds of years ; to those fair dames of old who opened the lattice and listened to the cry of the pedlar :—

Madam, come, see what you lack,  
 I've complexions in my pack ;  
 White and red you may have in this place,  
 To hide your old and wrinkled face.  
 First, let me have but a touch of your gold,  
     Then you shall seem  
     Like a girl of fifteen,  
 Although you be threescore and ten years old.

That is as old as Shakespeare, who may have written it. To avoid any unseemly rush, I may say that, so far as my research takes me, this priceless recipe has been lost in the mists of antiquity. I do not regret it, seeing no need for woman to gild the lily of her birthright. Besides, it is dangerous. Walpole places it on solemn record that the beautiful Lady Coventry killed herself with painting ; so bedaubing herself with pigment that fatal disease came of it. Another lady, not unconnected with Coventry, knew better, needing no paint, when :—

She linger'd, looking like a summer moon  
 Half-dipt in cloud : anon she shook her head,  
 And shower'd the rippled ringlets to her knee ;  
 Unclad herself in haste ; adown the stair  
 Stole on, and, like a creeping sunbeam, slid  
 From pillar unto pillar, until she reach'd  
 The gateway.

With such exquisite encouragement to leave the supremely well alone, women have always been strangely perverse in the management of their crowning glory, even to the bobbing and shingling of it. No new fashion, this. You may find mention of it in Isaiah, where loss of hair is instanced as punishment of those daughters of Zion who "made signs with their eyes"; signs that pilot men from calf-love to amoristic dotage; and have enriched our language with this choice derivation from Horne Tooke. "*Wench*—is the past participle of *Vincian*, *To Wink*; i.e. One that is *Winked at*; and, by implication, who may be had by a nod or a wink."

Passing many a dim century, during which, so ancient missals tell, women wore hair of natural length, we come to this, chronicled as fashionable intelligence in 1798—"Madame Tallien has been long looked up to in Paris as the leading star in the fashionable hemisphere. As proof of her influence in this fickle region, she lately took it into her head to become a complete crop—scarce could the scissor's



keep pace with the intelligence, and some of the fairest ringlets that ever floated on a neck of snow, were instantly sacrificed on the altar of whim." My lady readers will be interested to know that the fashion had so short a vogue that, in 1821, it was castigated in the past tense in this unsparing manner—"Some years back, the ladies consented to be cropped, for it was the fashion—but what a fashion. Why such was formerly the punishment of dissolute women and females, who, when they took the monastic vows, renouncing the pleasures of life, cut off their tresses."

Yet, to be fair, the ladies have this on their side. No matter how they do their hair, mere men, especially mere husbands, are never pleased with it, or the style of it; so what matters the cropping, bobbing, or shingling? Pepys is altogether impossible on the subject. Under date, March 13th, 1665, he writes: "This day my wife began to wear light-coloured locks, quite white almost, which, though it makes her look very pretty, yet, not being natural, vexes me, that I will not have her wear them." Later, he harps on the same annoying string, "great company; among others, Mrs. Stewart, very fine, with her locks done up with puffes, as my wife calls them: and several other great ladies had their hair so, though I do not like it; but my wife do mightily—but it is only because she sees it is the fashion."

What could the poor woman do to please the man ? He was grumpy of her taste, either in colour or style. Not that it made any difference. There is not the least doubt that she wore her light hair as long as she pleased. It made her "look very pretty," that sufficed, what Pepys said or thought was a detail. So, concerning those "puffes" the lady liked so "mightily," we may be sure of two things, she had them, and Pepys paid the bill, with a grumble, naturally. I doubt, however, whether he grumbled openly to his good lady—she had too many little things, awkwardly true, to remind him about. Pepys, be it remembered, had an ogling eye for beauty. In this, he was something of a microcosm of his sex, that :—

Each as he loves, his diff'ring praise bestows,  
 This youth to snowy Amaryllis bows,  
 While that to brown Lyceris pays his vows :  
 Daphnis in Flavia's yellow ringlets bound,  
 Admires the nymphs with golden tresses crown'd ;  
 While Thyrsis doting on the jetty black,  
 Starts at the burning gold, and flies with horror back.

Our lady is spending over-much time on her hair. We shall bottle a mere wig if we continue in this strain. That will not do. Addison, an experienced guide, shall lead us to further charms. With courtly bow, three-cornered hat in hand, he smiles his old-world smile, and says to the ladies—"Nature has laid

out all her art in beautifying your face ; she has touched it with vermilion, planted in it a double row of ivory, made it the seat of smiles and blushes, lighted it up and enlivened it with the brightness of the eyes, hung it on each side with curious organs of sense, given it airs and graces that cannot be described, and surrounded it with such a flowing shade of hair as sets all its beauties in the most agreeable light. In short, she seems to have designed your head as the cupola to the most glorious of her works." Such prose brings poetry hastening on the scene, jealous of its laurels :—

Behold how lovely smooth the forehead shines,  
 How milky white the soft descent inclines,  
 How fitly to the sparkling eyes it joins,  
 While gaily pleasing they, and sweetly bright,  
 Fill each beholder's heart with dear delight.  
 See on the blooming cheeks, so freshly spread,  
 So duly mixt, the native white and red ;  
 Mark what full roses on the lips appear,  
 What sweets they breathe, what balmy dew they wear.  
 But lost and endless were my pain, to trace  
 The vast infinity of beauty's grace :  
 Why should the muse in lavish numbers speak  
 The golden tresses, or the ivory neck ?  
 Why should the bashful nymph attempt to tell,  
 What hidden charms on rising bosoms swell ?

So far, so good, so prettily good, and so proper withal. But, as yet, scarcely a bust of our fair model.

Here we pause, feeling hesitant diffidence to proceed, remembering that M. Sergais, in his memoirs, relates that a Court preacher, making a panegyric on the chastity of Louis XIII, said from the pulpit : “ This prince, playing one day at shuttlecock with one of the ladies of the court, and the shuttlecock having fallen into her bosom, she desired that his majesty would take it out himself. But what did this chaste prince ? To avoid the snare, he took the tongs from the chimney corner, and by means of that instrument prevented the danger to which he might otherwise have been exposed from such a temptation.”

Most noble and virtuous prince. Inspired by his austerity, we refuse to be turned from the platonic ; gossipy Meiners must take us to Old Spain to help us out by inference. “ There,” says he, “ the legs of queens were so sacred, that it was a crime to think, or at any rate to speak of them. On the arrival of the Princess Maria Anna of Austria, the bride of Philip IV, in Spain, a quantity of the finest silk stockings were presented to her in a city where there were manufactories of those articles. The major-domo of the future queen threw back the stockings with indignation, exclaiming : ‘ Know, that queens of Spain have no legs ! ’ ”

There is no date on this statement, but it was

certainly made a long time ago—the approximate period is not worth turning up. Times have changed, legs are now in fashion, so are silk stockings. This happy style enables us, without exceeding the decorum of the daily mode, to add this from old Wither to the charms of our lady :—

Once a saucy bush, I spied  
 Pluck her silken skirts aside,  
 So discovered unto me  
 All those beauties to the knee ;  
 And before the thorn's entanglings  
 Had let go the silver spanglings,  
 I perceive the curious knitting  
 Of those joints was well befitting  
 Such a noble piece of work :  
 'Mongst whose turnings seem to lurk  
 Much to entertain the sight  
 With new objects of delight.  
 Then the leg, for shape as rare.  
 Will admit of no compare !  
 Straight it is ; the ankle lean !  
 Full the calf, but in the mean !  
 And the slender foot doth fit  
 So, each way, to suit with it ;  
 As she nothing less excels  
 Therein, than in all things else  
 Yea, from head to foot, her feature  
 Shows her an unblemished creature.

And now, my fair one perfect “ from head to foot,”  
 I have forgotten to dress her. How like a man !

Yet, as was written in 1638, there is this to excuse me :—

When the world was made, as I understood,  
 All that was made, God saw it was good ;  
 Then God made Adam, and gave him life,  
 And, of his rib, he made him a wife ;  
 So mild, so wond'rous mild,  
 Was Adam's sweet wife,  
 That it was ne'er known  
 Her tongue raised strife.

But when the world received a curse,  
 The women, like men, grew worse and worse.

The trouble began, you see, when “ figge leaves ” set the original fashion. Since then, a woman's dress has always reminded a man of what the first one cost him. The thought of that must be allowed to condone my oversight. But the remembrance does not embitter me ; whatever that dress cost, the wearer was worth it, and more. In truth, it would delight me to pen raptures on the alluring modes and dresses of the eternal feminine, but I cannot, the subject eludes me. Wherever I look, I behold so little to write about, yet, dazzling paradox, what I see is never scanty to a fault. Never ? well, hardly ever, might be the better thing to say—there is still truth in the verse which one of our poets laureate addressed to the ladies :—

The Venus, whose statue delights all mankind,  
Shrinks modestly back from the view ;  
And kindly should seem, by the artist designed,  
To serve as a model for you.

Then learn, with her beauties, to copy her air ;  
Nor venture too much to reveal !  
Our fancies will paint what you cover with care ;  
And double each charm you conceal.

*Which Might Have Been Written Before*

CONCERNING the making of books, we moderns know—how to label them. The back-slips of new books show plainly what titles those books bear. Old books, bound in vellum or sheep, often lack such ready sign of recognition. When bound in calf, they show it so faded by mellow age that gilt lettering, once bright and brave, takes a protective tint from its stout veteran binding ; becoming a neutral study in old gold and mature brown ; a charm, a delight, a restful joy ; but something of a trial, even if a loving one, when you want to find a book in a hurry.

Then the moderns are preferable, but not always. At rare and irregular intervals, a book is published which seems to be bound for people who walk upside down. Such, I am pained to observe, is the inverted posterior of a book I like. *Is It Good English* runs from bottom to top of the back of this volume. Here is the full title and author, as revealed when you walk round to the front cover—*Is It Good English And Like Matters*. By John o' London. The book



is a worthy one, we must bottle some of it. Meanwhile, to make sure where it is, I will shelve it next to Lubbock's *Pleasures of Life*; thus, by a nice association of ideas, being able to find it without standing on my head.

What is good English? That, truth to tell, is a question I have been asking myself ever since I began my first chapter. I am concerned to know that my bottles are as flawless as I can make them; that the English in which I bottle my books will stand the test of time. Here, apart from the conceit of it, I am baulked by this—"The history of dictionaries is the most mutable of all histories; it is a picture of the inconstancy of the knowledge of man; the learning of one generation passes away with another." This does not refer altogether to words, but it warns me that the language in which I write is not a permanent medium. Time may shatter it so badly that my bottles will sink—there is sight of Esperanto in the offing. Should this peril be escaped, Waller is dismaying on yet another:—

Poets that lasting marble seek,  
Must carve in Latin or in Greek:  
*We* write in sand; our language grows,  
And like the tide our work o'erflows.

So far as I know, I am not writing poetry; nor do I crave for "lasting marble." The ordinary

bottle-glass of commerce will do for me ; that English we speak with ease and know at a glance. Of this, I say as Carlyle did of the memory of Cromwell—it “has a good many centuries in it.” Against the moans of Waller, I set this proud record. In *Percy's Reliques*, we see a ballad written in the year 1307, on the death of Edward the first, and note this verse :—

Thah mi tonge were mad of stel,  
 Ant min herte yzote of bras,  
 The godness myht y never telle  
 That with kyng Edward was.

Without a glossary, any reader can catch the poetry of this ; and 1307 was a *very* long time ago, as time counts in the changes to which a living language is subject. From old Geoffrey Whitney's *Choice of Emblemes, and Other Devises*, Leyden, 1586, we gather this not unworthy paraphrase of Ephes. iv. 26.,

Cast swordes away, take laurell in your handes,  
 Let not the Sonne go downe uppon your ire.  
 Let hartes relente, and breake oulde rancors bandes,  
 And friendshipes force subdue your rashe desire.  
 Let desperate wightes and ruffians, thirst for blood  
 Win foes, with loue ; and think your conquest good.

This, letter for letter as written nearly three hundred and fifty years ago, is as readable as John o' London himself, and I know no more readable writer of to-day.

In prose, of even earlier date, there is incredibly little change, when it comes to the plain reading of it, as we see in this choice morsel : “ In the towne of Staf-forde was (William of Cantorbury saith, Ihon Capgrauce confirminge the same) a lustye minion, a trulle for the nonce, a pece for a prince, with whome, by report, the kinge at times was very familiare. Betwixte this wanton damsel or primerose pearlesse and Becket the chancellor, wente store of presentes, and of loue tokens plenty, and also the louers met at times, for when he resorted thidre, at no place would he be hosted and lodged, but wher as she held residence. In the dedde time of the night (the story saithe) was it her general custom, to come alone to his bedchambre with a candle in her hand.”

There, lest the bottle burst, we must stop. Those who would like to read the continuation should ask their library, subscription or free, for John Bale’s *Actes of English Votaries. Dedicated to kyng Edwarde the syxte*, 1550. It is as old as that, or the title-page before me is both faded and false. Getting on for four hundred years old, and, mark ye, the same old story. If Locke is to be trusted, the word “nioup,” meaning “adultery,” was one of the words Adam had occasion for in his “discourses with Eve”; and we know, from existing papyrus, that the oldest story on earth, the first glimmering sign of fiction, has plot and action on the theme we see

in the account of Potiphar's wife. Ah me! the moral turpitude of us humans! How old it is, how traditional, even in America. When John Wesley went over there, and that was no yesterday, I see record in my first edition of his life that sundry fair tempters, egged on by those who wished to see the back of him, were willing to deny the good man *nothing*.

But I digress, shamelessly, from the straight and narrow path of good words. Bad ones, it seems, I am drifting towards. These are not allowable in my bottle making, which is something of a pity, as their durability is astounding ; and they have been heard, so I am told, on vessels that float bravely well. It saddens me to admit it, but I find swear-words to be of time-defying virility. Having an old-soldierly acquaintance with the unprintable vernacular, I sometimes collate it with my *Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*. Francis Grose, London, 1785, (the date is material ; the second edition fell under the blue pencil, even at that period). By this process, I discover that, at least since 1785, our outcast tongue has retained all too much of its native impurity. But I must not use it. G. B. S. has gone as far as any man dare in modern print, and his one encarnimed word is drawing-room English ; every child at school hears and speaks of " bloody Queen Mary." Patrick Macgill handles the word with the stabbing force of a bayonet thrust in his war lament :—

## MATEY

Not coming back to-night, matey,  
 And reliefs are comin' through ?  
 We're all going out all right, matey,  
 Only we're leaving you.  
 Gawd ! It's a bloody sin, matey,  
 Now that we've finished the fight,  
 We go when reliefs come in, matey,  
 But you're staying here to-night

*Over the top is cold, matey,  
 You lie on the field alone——*

Those two lines show us the mine from which the sterling metal of enduring English is worked :—

*Ofer se top is ceald, macca,  
 Eócw lyge on se feld eal án——*

Ignoring the slang terminal “ y ” in “ matey,” as we indeed may, all of it is hewn from that bed-rock which Trench quarried so nobly. “ Suppose,” he writes, “ the English language to be divided into a hundred parts ; of these, to make a rough distribution, sixty would be Saxon ; thirty would be Latin (including of course the Latin which has come to us from the French) ; five would be Greek. We should thus have assigned ninety-five parts, leaving the other five, perhaps too large a residue, to be divided among all the other languages from which we have adopted isolated words. . . .

“The Anglo-Saxon is not so much, as I have just called it, one element of the English language, as the foundation of it, the basis. All its joints, its whole *articulation*, its sinews and its ligaments, the great body of articles, pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions, numerals, auxiliary verbs, all the smaller words which serve to knit together and bind the larger into sentences, these, not to speak of the grammatical structure of the language, are exclusively Saxon. The Latin may contribute its tale of bricks, yea, of goodly and polished hewn stones, to the spiritual building, but the mortar, with all that holds and binds the different parts together, and constitutes them into a house, is Saxon throughout.”

With beautiful and reverent scholarship, Trench goes on :—“Thus examine the Lord’s Prayer. It consists of exactly seventy words. You will find that only the following six claim the rights of Latin citizenship—‘trespasses,’ ‘trespass,’ ‘temptation,’ ‘deliver,’ ‘power,’ ‘glory.’ Nor would it be very difficult to substitute for any one of these a Saxon word . . . still stronger than this, in five verses out of Genesis, containing one hundred and thirty words, there are only five not Saxon, less, that is, than four in the hundred.”

Taking Trench as our guide, we see what abundance of Saxon there must be in Tindale’s version. William Canton, in his *Bible and the Anglo-Saxon People*, says

of the English of Tindale :—“ The linguistic changes and the consummate scholarship of three and a half centuries have altered it so little that it is computed that at least 85 per cent of the words stand as they stood in 1523.” And so many of them Saxon, the words that live, those little ones my mother taught me ; so near, even now, to *Uren Fader thic arth in heofnas*, the eighth century rendering, by Bishop Edfrid, of the first six words of the Lord’s Prayer.

“ Great verily,” says Camden, “ was the glory of our tongue, before the Norman Conquest, in this, that the old English could express, most aptly, all the conceptions of the mind in their own tongue, without borrowing from any.” Such English for the English has left an undying influence on our spoken language, extending beyond the literary legacy proved by Trench, wonderful as that is. Cowper heard Anglo-Saxon over a thousand years of time when he wrote :—

I am Monarch of all I survey !  
My right there is none to dispute !  
From the centre all round to the sea,  
I am Lord of the fowl and the brute !

“ Survey ”—“ sea ” ; the original Anglo-Saxon sound “ sàe ” perfects the rhyme. Cowper heard that when he lived in Huntingdon, bordering on the Fens, once land of swamps and reeds, where Hereward

the Wake led his tough fen-men against the Norman when "the Wake was up"; and where, to this hour, you may hear small words spoken after the old way. The rhyme is by no means peculiar to Cowper. Dryden used it :—

A thousand ships were mann'd, to sail the sea ;  
Nor had their just resentments found delay,  
Had not the winds and waves oppos'd their way.

Pope carries the sound into the last word ending with "ea" introduced into our language. In his *Rape of the Lock*, he wrote :—

Here thou, great Anna ! whom three realms obey,  
Dost sometimes counsel take—and sometimes tea.

It seems that our native words are growing like pretty moss over the bare ugliness of Latin tags. As John o' London says : "Some of these tags are overdone. But they tend of themselves to disappear into translations. 'Let the shoemaker stick to his last' is now much more often written than 'Ne sutor ultra crepidam.'" If so, such writing is stilted. "Cobbler" is the idiom of it, my dear John o' London ; and if you take the idiom from a proverb, you leave but the lees of any language ; as is granted by no less than three professors, two English and one German, who translate "Ne sutor ultra crepidum"



“ Let the cobbler stick to his last,” in a standard work now before me.

In the idiom of our rich store of proverbs, we boast “ Let the cobbler stick to his last ” as but one of a rare old company. We muster with it, “ Cobbler’s law ; he that takes money must pay the shot ”—“ Cobblers and tinkers are the best ale-drinkers ”—“ Cobbler’s Monday—every Monday of the year ”—“ The cobbler’s child and the smith’s mare are ever ill shod,” and :—

The higher the plum-tree, the riper the plum ;  
The richer the cobbler, the blacker his thumb.

“ Shoemaker ” belongs to—“ Permit the shoemaker to adhere to his profession ” ; and I want to wring his genteel neck before we come to *that* ; else, who knows ? “ shoemaker ” may smirk into :—

*2 Cit.* Truly, sir, in respect of a fine workman, I am but, as you would say, a cobbler.

*Mar.* But what trade art thou ? Answer me directly.

*2 Cit.* A trade, sir, that, I hope, I may use with a safe conscience ; which is, indeed, sir, a mender of bad souls.

*Julius Cæsar, Act I, Scene I.*

Altogether, “ shoemaker ” is not of the proverbial idiom, place him in it and you make a snob of him. There is no pun in this, merely proof that the shorter the word, the further it goes and the harder it hits.

Grose, in 1785, defines "snob" as "A nickname for a shoemaker." It was unknown to Shakespeare, and is not admitted as presentable by the dictionary makers of 1770. In 1829, Thackeray, while a student at Trinity College, contributed to *The Snob*; which shows how a short and forcible word will not be denied, raising itself from the gutter of slang to the highway of good English. On the other hand, old dictionaries are white with the bones of dead and forgotten long words. On consecutive pages of my 1726 edition of Bailey, I note—*Collabefaction*, "a destroying, wasting, or decaying."—*Collatitious*, "done by conference or contribution of many."—*Collectitious*, "gathered up and down."—*Collistrigiated*, "pilloried."—*Colluctation*, "a struggling together or wrestling." Possibly, some of these may have lingered. At a guess, I surmise you will find them in Carlyle, if anywhere. But if written to-day they would amount to a word mirage without a glossary, and an affected impertinence with one.

Words, then, if meant to last, should be short. They must be short to be clear. It is the long words, I think, which are most used by men to conceal their thoughts. Johnson observes "Every man is, or hopes to be, an idler"—"When men come to like a sea life they are not fit to live on land." True, this is not *like* him. He is more himself in—"We are not here to sell a parcel of boilers and vats, but

the potentiality of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice." That was his remark at the sale of Thrale's brewery. No mind but his could have conjured up such an image in *such* a connection ; or give such a word-teeming definition of "network" as "any thing reticulated, or decussated, with interstices at equal distances between the intersections." But when plain talk was his design, he was master of words short and apt. "An odd thought strikes me—we shall receive no letters in the grave," he said on his death-bed ; his last words were "God bless you, my dear" ; a blessing begged by the young daughter of a friend—that is why it hurts me to read or hear of "Johnsonese," vile word.

Short words must be handled with care ; they cut deep. "Had Jerome of Prague known, like our Shakespeare, the virtue of an *if*, or agreed with Hobbes, that he should not have been so positive in the use of the verb *is*—he might have been spared from the flames."

Horne Tooke, and *he* knew something about words, avows that *of* and *that* were twisted into "the abject instruments of my civil extinction" ; and that by such great lawyers as Mansfield and Thurlow.

Taylor has curious pages showing how, from Lord Chief Justice downwards, our lawyers once wrangled at incredible length on the meaning of

the word "upon," without, as far as I can see, ever hinting at the straight meaning a labourer blurts into the word, when he says he "has been put upon."

The terse force of the words of manual workers is one of the seven wonders of the world of words ; of which four are in the Bible, and two in Shakespeare and Milton. The seventh roars out when, with "Whoa !" "Gee-up !" "Kim-up !" "Hey !" "Hi !" they clear a cattle market of horn and hoof ; when with "Below there, Bill !" they knock an old mansion into bricks and dust ; when "Mind yer backs !" moves mountains of fish, vegetables, luggage, anything lusty porters handle. Afloat, what little words move big ships. I love short words from men of hard hands—they ring true.

Would that more of us could catch the gasp and strain of these words. Listened to with sympathy, by those who have ears to hear and power to be fair with effect ; they are vastly better than "those rabble-charming words, which carry so much wild-fire wrapped up in them" ; and it is most assuredly a case of listening to the one or the other. There is no choice between attention, it should be rapt, to the short words of the toiler ; or the enduring of "class consciousness," "proletariat" and similar rigmarole. The first is merely telling a dustman that he does not happen to be a lighterman ; the

second, that he served the State, not by paying taxes, but by begetting children—for such was the enviable condition of the *proletarii* of ancient Rome. The mischief is that these fine-sounding nothings among words have a danger of their own. Big and hazy words are dangerous, if you can get a plain man to listen to them. The bigger the words, the less he understands them, the greater the danger, if he will but listen. “There is no such way to gain admittance or give defence to strange and absurd doctrines, as to guard them round about with legions of obscure, doubtful, and undefined words.” Locke wrote that—Lenin understood it, fiendishly well. How ill the tallow jargon of this hybrid Russian befits “our English, the language of men, ever famous and bold in the achievements of liberty.”

“Yes ; and words, if they are not watched, will do deadly work sometimes. There are masked words droning and skulking about us.” Such assassins among words must be cloaked in fearsome length to strike home. Our England will be in real danger if ever the lexicon of class hate boasts its “classconsciousnessibility.” You doubt it? You may, but there is this. Unless Bishop Burnet is much mistaken, and he lived through it ; the revolution of 1688 might never have succeeded but for the inspiration of the doggerel word-faking in :—

## A NEW SONG

Ho ! brother Teague ! dost hear de Decree !

Lilli burlero bullen a la.

Dat we shall have a new Debittie.

Lili burlero bullen a la.

Lero, lero, lero, lero, lilli burlero bullen a la.

Lero, lero, lero, lero, lilli burlero bullen a la.

Gibberish ! Of course it is ; but it drove the last of the Stuarts from the throne of England. When his army sang it, he packed up and ran away, pitching the Great Seal into the Thames, and “ crossing the Seas in so small a Vessell, and in the depth of winter, he was pen’d up in a small cabbın, where was just room for him and the Duke of Berwick to sit, in continual apreheensions of being attacked and Seized again by his Rebellious Subjects ; however it was some cause of mirth to him, when growing very hungry and dry, Captain Travanian went to fry his Majesty some bacon, but by misfortune the frying pan haveing a hole in it, he was forced to stop it with a pitched rag, and to ty an old furr’d Can about with a cord, to make it hould the drink they put in it ; however the King never eat or drank more heartely in his life.”

And so, away to :—

. . . a false and foreign court ;  
 Jostled by the flouting nobles,  
 Half their pity, half their sport.

Having shown a king driven into exile by dint of words, I feel that the sergeant-majoring of words into what may be accepted as good English is no task for me. Let another parade them in column formation and march them off in review order. My words are rebellious rascals, having no fear of Lindley Murray in the whole pack of them. When writing, if perplexed by the inward question—Is it good English? I put down such words as seem to me to fit my thoughts, leave it at that, and hope for the best. This is sad of a career which opened with dazzling promise when my youthful essay on English was rewarded with Macaulay's essays (which served me right). Had I been a Peter Pan of words, my book would parse as well as it now scans badly. Poor bottles, these of mine. Never mind, their borrowed contents may keep them afloat.

And, after all, after the last grammarian is buried and the last of the purists is dead; whence came the English of Shakespeare, Milton, Bunyan, Tindale? No man knoweth, only this :—

. . . When God commands to take the trumpet,  
 And blow a dolorous or thrilling blast,  
 It rests not with man's will what he shall say,  
 Or what he shall conceal.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *A Vintage Year*

IN this bottling of books, I must be discreet, as I am reminded by the saying—"Show me a man's library and I will tell you his character." By this token, my library places me somewhere among the saints and sinners, exactly where is a little difficult to say ; but there is indication in the circumstance that, taking a few of my books as arranged on a shelf within easy reach, the titles are : *Table-Talk* ; Being the Discourses of John Seldon, Esq., London, 1716—*Essays of Michael Seigneur de Montaigne*. Made English by Charles Cotton, Esq., London, 1700—*The Seven deadlie Sinns of London* : Drawne in seven severall Coaches, Through the seven severall Gates of the Citie, Bringing the plague with them. Tho : Dekker, At London, 1606. *Records of Women*, Felicia Hemans. *How Men Propose*. The Fateful Question and its Answer. Agnes Stevens. *The Day after The Wedding*. By Marie-Therese Kemble. As now performed at the Theatres Royal, London—*The Oxford Sausage*. Written by the Most Celebrated Wits of the College of Oxford, 1787.



By this it will be seen that the selection of my books is what may be called roomy, there is nothing bigoted about it. And I protest that, to a discerning eye, my library reflects the ownership of a man whose books are careful of the company they keep. All my collecting life, I have excluded and rejected those imposing volumes, "without which no gentleman's library may be considered complete"; a winnowing which has given me a library of character, of body, and of transcendent respectability.

Acts of Parliament, I would have you to know, lend dignity to my library shelves, and, the marvel of it, dignity without dullness. The reason is that my statutes were laid down in a vintage year, 1656. They came soon after that great period when we were the best governed people in our history. This was when Cromwell, under the Instrument of Government, issued Orders in Council which had the force of law until they were reversed by Parliament, and there was no Parliament sitting. As specimens of legislative enactments, they are of flavour worth bottling for posterity. Some, it seems, we might decant for immediate use. Here is one, very much for example :—



AN ACT  
FOR  
PUNISHING  
Of such Persons as live at  
HIGH RATES,

And have no visible Estate, Profession or Calling  
Answerable thereunto,

At the Parliament begun at *Westminster* the 17<sup>th</sup> Day  
of *September*, *Anno Domini*, 1656.



Whereas divers lewd and dissolute Persons in this Commonwealth, live at very high Rates and great Expences, having no visible Estate, Profession, or Calling (answerable thereunto) to maintain themselves in their licentious, loose and ungodly practices, do make it their Trade  
A and

From this sumptuary Act, now before me, I infer that people who live above their incomes, if any, are something of a national institution with us, having their niche in history, and this law unto themselves. Our old Act is inconsiderate enough to dub them "divers lewd and dissolute persons," who "cheat, deboyst, cozen, and deceive" ; hard words to throw at folk who cannot explain how they contrive to hold their heads so high on pockets so low. Harsh as it reads, I have a fondness for this old Act. Somewhere in the Cromwellian black letter of it, I detect a great possibility. I note a clause, perhaps a little obscure, which provides that informer or prosecutor is entitled to share in considerable pecuniary amerce-ments enforceable within the meaning of the Act. If this is still the law of the land, (and it may be, many of these old measures are unrepealed,) I have a shrewd notion of forming myself into a limited liability company to work an exposed vein of untold gold. To save trouble, I think I should indict the community, and have done with it, serving myself with a preliminary writ as a test case.

*An Act for Limiting and Settling the Prices for Wines,* is another of the 1656 crop, now, alas ! so dead a letter that we can but mourn it. What luscious smack there is in the roll of it, as we read—"No Canary wines, Muscadells, or Alligants, or other Spanish wines, shall be sold by retail, at any rate,

proportion, or price, exceeding eighteen pence the quart. And that no Gasgoine or other French wines whatsoever, shall be sold by retail, at any rate, proportion, or price, exceeding seven pence the quart. And that no Rhenish wines whatsoever shall be sold by retail, at any rate, proportion, or price, exceeding twelve pence the quart."

This exhausts the legal wine list of the Commonwealth, yet, short as it is, it includes brands which seem to have vanished. In a future edition of his delectable *Handbook of Wine*, Wm. J. Todd, if but for the information of posterity, must explain what has happened to these old vintages with the raree names, likewise their prices, and the commendable consistency of quartly measure. After a tasting glass, what joy to shout, "Bring me a quart!" What a truly great drinker, who, without hiccup, could say, "Bring me another!"

The exquisite thing is, that in liquor so priced, the Cavaliers commonly put a crumb of bread, and drank with loyal gusto to the toast. "God send this *Crum well* down!"

Toasts in reply might be culled from the roysterings of the Calves' Head Club—the fighting Ironsides were too grim for such frivolities. Silent and steady drinking was more their habit, and they could do their solemn share of it when the good wine flowed. The red nose of Old Noll himself was not altogether

tinted by Huntingdon ale. The Puritans were taking care of their own "stomach's sake" when they set a limit on the price of wine, and small blame to them. Wine by the quart, for mere pence, is good for all men, and best of all for them when they most need it :—

There was an old fellow at Waltham Cross  
 Who merrily sang, when he lived by the loss !  
 He cheered up his heart, when his goods went to rack,  
 With a "Hem ! Boys ! Hem !" and a cup of old sack.

Another dip in the 1656 bin brings to light—  
*An Act Against Vagrants and Wandering, idle, dissolute persons*, which ends with the savage clause—"That if any person or persons commonly called fiddlers or minstrels, shall at any time be taken playing, fiddling and making musick in any inn, ale-house or tavern, or shall be taken proffering themselves, or intreating any person or persons to hear them play, or make musick in any the places aforesaid, that every person or persons so taken, shall be adjudged, and are hereby adjudged and declared to be rogues, vagabonds and sturdy beggars."

Nominal as it reads, this punishment was fiendish in effect. The Act revives the punitive barbarism of an older measure of Elizabeth, setting in motion that ancient English law against sturdy beggars, under which a man, if caught begging once, being neither aged nor infirm, was whipped at the cart's tail. If

caught a second time, his ear was slit or bored through with a hot iron. If caught a third time, being thereby proved to be of no use on this earth, he suffered death as a felon. So the law of England remained for sixty dark years, and so it was brought forth afresh, under Cromwell, to stamp flat mere fiddlers and makers of music. Small wonder, in such an age, there vanished the last of those strange mendicants, who sang :—

A 'TOM O' BEDLAM SONG

From the Hag and hungry goblin  
 That into rags would rend ye  
 All the spirits that stand  
 By the naked man,  
 In the book of moons defend ye !  
 That of your five sound senses  
 You never be forsaken,  
 Nor travel from  
 Yourselves with Tom  
 Abroad, to beg your bacon.

With a heart of furious fancies  
 Whereof I am commander ;  
 With a burning spear,  
 And a horse of air,  
 To the wilderness I wander.  
 With a knight of ghosts and shadows,  
 I summoned am to tourney,  
 Ten leagues beyond  
 The world's wide end,  
 Methinks it is no journey !

Our vintage year, 1656, now yields a measure of striking interest to Macaulay's New Zealander, poor fellow, perhaps the hardest-worked figure in quoted simile. This is his second turn of duty in my book, and the odd thing is that he never belonged to Macaulay at all. As the indispensable Gurney Benham informs us, Macaulay lapsed into plagiarism when depicting the day "when some traveller from New Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Pauls." The same idea occurs in the title of a book published in 1780; Southey more than hints at it in a dedication; and Walpole, in 1774, almost has it pat in "At last some curious native of Lima will visit London and give a sketch of the ruins of Westminster and St. Pauls." This is rapping the knuckles of Macaulay with that ferrule of hard research generally reserved for Shakespeare, notably by "the wretched Malone," who labours to tell us—"The total number of lines in our author's *Second and Third Part of King Henry VI*, is Six Thousand and Forty-three; of these, as I conceive, 1771 lines were written by some author who preceded Shakespeare; 2373 were formed by him on the foundation laid by his predecessors; and 1899 lines were entirely his own composition." So much for the arithmetic of criticism, duly audited and found correct.

The Act, thus digressed into notice, is entitled—*An Act for the Preventing of the Multiplicity of Buildings in and about the Suburbs of London, and within Ten Miles thereof*, 1656. This Act meant business, make no mistake about that, and there was money in it. In short, it provided that, within the prescribed area, no new building was to be erected under penalty of a thousand pounds. Furthermore, it was retrospective in effect, providing that a tax equalling a year's rent was to be paid on every house built since 1620 within the boundaries specified in the Act. There were many exemptions, but when every allowance is made for these, there remains ample evidence of stern determination to keep the bricks and mortar of London within bounds ; and also to inflict a stiff property tax on houses built during the thirty-six years preceding the Act.

Tucked between Clarendon and Camden, my folio shelf contains an item which ought to show what justification there was for this measure, or was not, as the case may be. Here we have it, in old calf, with a brass clasp across the front, looking like a devotional book in disguise—LONDINOPOLIS ; *An Historicall Discourse or Perlustration of the City of London*. By Jam Howel, Esq., London, 1657. Among what our author calls "The Chiefest Materials that Go to the Compilement of this new Peece," we find—"From the Liberties of St. Katherine to



Wapping, the usual place of Execution for Pyrates and Sea-rovers, there to continue hanging till three Tydes overflow and cover them ; I say, from St. Katherine to Wapping, 'tis yet in the memory of man, there was never a House standing, but the Gallows which was further removed, in regard of the Buildings. But now there is a continued street towards a mile long, from the Tower, all along the River, almost as far as Radcliffe." That rings true, grimly so, and may be accepted as proof of the amazing growth of London in the seventeenth century. But Howel needs a deal of swallowing when he mentions a population, in 1657, "within that compass, where the point of the Lord Mayors Sword reacheth, which may amount in all, to a million and a half of humane souls." I am not minded to stroll through my Londonaria to discuss the pros and cons of this ; it is too delightfully easy to get lost in London in the process. The immediate task is to bottle sundry Act of Parliament ; that will do for the present.

And, I see, this old Act on London about fills the bottle. We shall not be able to get the cork in if we try to make room for *An Act for the settling of the Postage of England, Scotland, and Ireland* ; the historic *Act for the Better Observation of the Lords-Day*, both of the 1656 vintage, and one or two other tempters from that same old bin, originally in the Walpole library, now mine by a lucky purchase for fewer

## BOOKS IN BOTTLES

shillings than it was worth tens of pounds. Where did I pick it up, you ask? You may ask; there will be "no reply." Other treasures may be there some day; you might be first on the spot.

## CHAPTER SIX

### *In Which We Disport with an Alembic*

AT the breakfast table of a friend, I was airily informative on the remote antiquity of human attainment in perfection of manufacture. With booklore in mind, I stated that modern metallurgy could not compound bronze with the cutting edge of the swords of the ancients. Proceeding discursively, I said that man-hacking Ghurka knives of ghastly renown were made of steel superior to our best ; and that the secret of their tempering was caste knowledge in India for many centuries before an ounce of metal was hammered at Sheffield. " Well," said the quiet man behind the marmalade, " I will make you a ton of bronze, which will cut any of that metal in the British Museum like so much wax ; and shall be pleased to take your order for a gross or two of Gurkha kukris' warranted better quality steel than your sample from India."

Bother the man, how dare he ! But he did dare, coming from Sheffield. It came out that he had been " in steel " all his life ; that he was prepared to supply anything from a light railway to a suspension

bridge ; and that he understood every mysterious fibre of the metal he handled. He pulverized me genially with fascinating detail of the magical triumphs of his great industry, and left me with the metallic achievement of all Sheffield to warn me off the subject for ever and ever. Yet, I protest, he hurried me, interrupting when I was about to broach a topic of peculiar interest to a man of sterling metal, for such I allow him to be, despite his ruthless conversational armament :—

A dagger hanging at his belt he had,  
Made of an ancient sword's well-tempered blade ;  
He wore a Sheffield whittle in his hose.

And, such brilliant play did he make with his cold steel, such was the pressing of his point against my throat, that he awed me into silence, stopping my talk as it neared the misty centuries when :—

. . . alchemists of old  
Could turn a brazen kettle,  
Or leaden cistern into gold ;  
That noble tempting metal.

“ We conceive that a perfect good concoction, or digestion, or maturation of some metals, will produce gold,” observes Bacon, in his *Sylva Sylvarum*, 1627. My discourse on this golden prospect might have inspired the man from Sheffield to great things, had

he not turned me away from it. His trained mind should have detected infinity of affluence in a possible revival of the auriferous art of transmutation ; an ancient British industry, as practised by our Edward I ; who, when his treasury was bare as a gnawed bone, bade his tax-wrung subjects be patient, on the security of his royal word, guaranteed by proclamation, that alchemists were filling his coffers with gold. The precedent is a clarion call, clamouring for instant and intensive activity after the old-time method. If Sheffield heed, and be but true to the best traditions of its consummate mastery of metals ; the National Debt will be washed away in a golden rain ; every factory shaft within sight of Sheffield shall be covered with beaten gold in celebration ; and my share, though meagre, as befits my literary calling, will arrive in ten ton trucks.

Now, my worthy Sheffield friend, here are your working directions ; and, in the name of our common impecuniosity ; for the sake of the newly poor and the old that were ever with us, I beseech you to heed these wise words of the ancient. They are to be found in my library, in this rare volume—*A new Light of Alchemie taken out of the Fountaine of Nature and manual Experience*. To which is added, a Treatise of Sulphur, by Michael Sandivogius ; also nine books of the Nature of Things, by Paracelsus, translated out of the Latin, into the English Tongue, by

J. F. London, 1650. This is our text-book, quite a modern work on alchemy ; a mystery so old that Cæsar commanded treatises on alchemy to be burnt throughout the Roman dominions, and Tubal Cain is mentioned as an adept by ancient scribes. The dress and ritual of the esoteric brotherhood demand careful study ; success depends on slavish attention to detail ; the charm is broken if the least thing is slurred over ; there must be grave and earnest attention to this at Sheffield, or dross, not gold, will flow from the crucible at the final test. Note, then, alchemists “ wear leather garments, with a pouch and apron, wherewith they wipe their hands. They put their fingers amongst coales, into clay and dung, not into gold rings. They are sooty and black, like smithes, or colliers, and doe not pride themselves with clean and beautiful faces ; but, laying aside all these kinds of vanities, they delight to be busied about the fire, and to learn the degrees of the science of Alchymie. Of this order are distillation, resolution, putrefaction, extraction, calcination, receberation, sublimation, fixation, separation, reduction, coagulation, tincture,” and sundry other processes of some obscurity, which I omit, not desiring to confuse those gladsome workers, whose “ beautiful faces,” begrimed in the good cause, will enthral me when I journey to Sheffield to see how the gold factory is progressing towards output.

Danger must be faced. If the furnace “be more straight, large, high, or low, than its due measure and proportion, and than the ruling and operating spirits and soul of the matter do desire; the heat of our secret philosophical fire (which is most acute) will too violently excite and provoke the matter to operation, and sometimes the vessel will fly into a thousand pieces, not without danger of the body and life of the operator.” Such peril will not quail the stout hearts of Sheffield, who understand the seething tricks of every kind of retort. To make the gold. “Take ten parts of air, one part of living gold, or living silver; and put all these into thy vessel; boil this air first until it be water, and then no water. If thou art ignorant of this, and knowest not how to boil the air, without all doubts thou shalt err; seeing this is the matter of the ancient philosophers.”

Very clear, very simple, but only part of the essential process—I hesitate to divulge more at this stage—further details will be announced in the full prospectus. The sceptical, if there can be any, I answer in the words of good Michael Sandivogius. “If any man doubt of the truth of the art, let him read the voluminous writings of the ancient philosophers, verified by reason and experience, whom we may deservedly give credit to in their own art; but if any will not give credit to them, then we know

not how to dispute with them, as denying principles : for deaf and dumb men cannot speak.”

Should classical argument fail, Ben Jonson must convince with his alluring lines on the alchemist at ease. The glittering state of his Sir Epicure Mammon shows us what man may do when everything he touches turns to gold :—

*Mam.* For I do mean  
To have a list of wives and concubines  
Equal with Solomon. . . .  
I will have all my beds blown up, not stuf ;  
Down is too hard. . . .

. . . . .  
My mists  
I'll have of perfume, vapour'd 'bout the room,  
To lose ourselves in ; and my baths, like pits  
To fall into ; from when we will come forth,  
And roll us dry in gossamer and roses—

. . . . .  
My meat shall all come in, in Indian shells,  
Dishes of agate set in gold, and studded  
With emeralds, sapphires, hyacinths, and rubies.  
The tongues of carps, dormice, and camels' heels,  
Boiled in the spirit of sol, and dissolv'd pearl,  
Apicius' diet, gainst the epilepsy ;  
And I will eat these broths with spoons of amber  
Headed with diamond and carbuncle.  
. . . I'll say unto my cook, *There's gold,*  
*Go forth and be a knight.*

*The Alchemist, Act 2, Scene I.*

“What a ‘towering bravery’ there is in his sensuality,” says Lamb of Epicure Mammon. “He



affects no pleasure under a sultan. It is as if Egypt with Assyria strove in luxury." Yes, that is so, and it is a delicate study in blue-pencil to note, in 1808, what portions of the original Lamb felt obliged to delete.

Thomas Browne, author of *Religio Medici*, although no alchemist, had a kindred liking for prying into the secrets of nature, not for gold, his desire being to probe "the causes of common errors." His *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, in the folio and best edition of 1650, is shot through with gleams of the sunrise of science. Browne struck the shackles of ignorance and superstition from truth as he saw it; however distorted his view may sometimes appear to we who see more clearly. An original thinker, he wrote as he thought, buttressed his opinions by experience and experiment; and has a style entitling him to be reckoned the Montaigne of scientific inquiry. In our day, we find Browne of living interest if we regard him as a capable old helper in a desultory comparison between what he knew and what we know; thus obtaining odd glimpses of the progress of knowledge since he lived and wrote.

Browne comments on "a powder, as would discharge a bullet without report." Norton, his contemporary in 1643, gives a print with explanatory text of "ye elbowe gonne," a "peece" designed to shoot round corners. These ideas point to

Pseudodoxia Epidemica:  
OR,  
ENQUIRIES  
INTO  
Very many Received  
T E N E N T S,  
And commonly Presumed  
TRUTHS.

---

By THOMAS BROWNE D<sup>r</sup> of Physick.

---

*The Second Edition,*  
Corrected and much Enlarged by the Author.

TOGETHER  
With some Marginall Observations, and a Table  
Alphabetically at the end.

---

JUL. SCALIG.

*Ex Libris colligere quae prodiderunt Autores longe est periculosissimum;  
Rerum ipsarum cognitio vera à rebus ipsis est.*

---

L O N D O N,  
Printed by A. Miller, for Edw. Dod and Nath.  
Ekins, at the Gunne in Ivie Lane. 1650.

refinements in the military art we have yet to see in practice ; and are hereby revealed for nothing to inspire any mad man who may be thinking about improved murder-gear for the " next " war.

Any pervert, broody for hatching another war, should be dry-fed on dessicated sponges, and demolished by disruption ; " as Daniel destroyed the dragon by a composition of three things," says Browne, " whereof neither was poison alone, nor properly all together, that is, pitch, fat, and hair ; according as is expressed in the history. Then Daniel took pitch, and fat, and hair, and did seeth them together and make lumps thereof ; these he put in the Dragons mouth, and so he burst asunder. That is, the fat and pitch being cleaving bodies, and the hair continually extimulating the parts, by the action of one, nature was provoked to expel, but by the tenacity of the other forced to retain ; so that there being no passage in or out, the Dragon brake in peeces." Such bolussing is without recent parallel ; the nearest on record is an account of destroying a shark by doping it with a red-hot shot wrapped in sail-cloth ; the harpoon-guns which detonate prussic acid into whales, the biggest of God's creatures now breathing His air, must be classified apart as a modern refinement of which we are naturally proud.

" That a bear brings forth her young informous

and unshapen, which she fashioneth after by licking into shape," is rejected by Browne, in which he is supported by zoological folk who have intimate knowledge of interesting ursine occasions. His words, however, show that "licking things into shape" cannot be modern slang; which confirms a growing feeling in my mind that "modern slang" is a misnomer. After finding "blinking idiot" in Shakespeare, "shut up all" in Baker's *Chronicles*, and "jolly wise fellows" in 1622, one feels inclined to jeer at the very existence of slang; treating it rather as an approved medium of literary expression, of which the Bard was master when he chose, as in this outburst from his Doll Tear-Sheet.

"Away you cut-purse rascal! you filthy bung, away! by this wine, I'll thrust my knife in your mouldy chaps, an you play the fancy cuttle with me! Away, you bottle-ale rascal! you basket-hilt stale juggler, you!"

*King Henry IV*, Pt. 2, Act 2, Scene 4.

Browne constantly exposes the working of his mind in his groping after truth; doing it with the set purpose of a man who has nothing to hide. This is well shown in his observations on the elephant: "Whereof there generally passeth an opinion it hath no joints; and this absurdity is seconded with another, that being unable to lie down, it sleepeth against a tree, which the Hunters observing doe

saw almost asunder ; whereon the beast relying, by the fall of the tree falls also down itself, and is able to rise no more. Which conceit is not the daughter of later times, but an old and gray-headed error, even in the dais of Aristotle." A more emphatic refutation could not be desired ; yet he proceeds to aver, " That some Elephants have not only written whole sentences, as Ælian ocularily testifieth, but have also spoken, as Oppianus delivereth, and Christophorus a Costa particularly relateth ; although it sound like that of Achilles Horse in Homer, we do not conceive impossible."

His rejection of a jointless elephant, and belief in one which could write and speak, is amusingly odd to our minds. But Browne, reasoning as a doctor, saw the absurdity of a jointless quadruped at a glance, and would have none of it, Aristotle or no Aristotle. He sides with the weight of classical authority in favour of writing and talking elephants, because, having no firsthand knowledge of the animal, he reasons on the line that if a parrot can be taught to speak, why not an elephant, a much more sagacious creature ? He mentions monkeys in the same connection, having no Kipling to set him right :—

" We may not speak to our fathers,  
 For if the farmers knew  
 They would come up to the forest  
 And set us to labour too."

This is the horrible story  
 Told as the twilight fails,  
 And the monkeys walk together  
 Holding each other's tails.

*The Legend of Evil.*

“Why we confine our food unto certain Animals, and totally reject some others,” shows Browne in a debate which is still associated with our lives. “First there is no absolute necessity to feed on any,” is a bold pointer towards vegetarianism in the middle of the seventeenth century. Browne soon brings the general argument precisely where we find it. “Men think they have fared hardly, if in times of extremity they have descended so low as Doggs ; but Galen delivereth, that young, fat and gelded, they were the food of many Nations ; and Hippocrates ranketh the flesh of Whelps with that of Birds. The opinion in Galens time, which Pliny also followeth, deeply condemneth Horseflesh, and conceived the very blood thereof destructive ; but no diet is more common among the Tartars, who also drink their blood. . . . As for the objection against birds and beasts of prey, it acquitteth not our practice, who observe not this distinction in fishes : nor regard the same in our diet of Pikes, Perches and Eeles. Nor are we excused herein, if we examine the stomachs of Mackerels, Cods and Whitings.”

True, yet men still eat sparrow-pies, but not

sparrow-hawks. Despite enforced experiments during the siege of Paris, the siege of Ladysmith, and the Great War, the human palate has always swung back like a magnet to its traditional foods ; there is no record of any strange dish surviving the hour of its war-time necessity. Peaceful persuasion has failed utterly and completely. Frank Buckland was an enthusiast for new sources of food supply ; tasting everything edible which came his way ; whale meat, lion, boa, were his extremes or indicate them ; and there was grim jesting in the family household that it was never safe to take names on the menu for granted. He was the soul of the Acclimatization Society, which held its inaugural dinner in 1862 ; the bill of fare including sea slug soup, bird's nest soup, soup from the sinews of the Axis deer, semoule soup, made from the flour of a wheat grown in Algeria, kangaroo steamer, Chinese lamb, kangaroo ham, Syrian pig, Canadian goose, Honduras turkey ; and much else, with " a new kind of coffee," and " a new tea called ' Ayapana ' tea," to wash the assorted solids down. None of these earned gustatory naturalisation ; they are as much freak dishes to-day as they were in 1862. We will not give them stomach room ; and still the marvel grows of the calm bravery of the man who ate the first oyster, glistening raw and slippery in the cold dish of its gritty shell. We are too forgetful of the heroism man has shown, not only

at table, but also in bed, as we are reminded by the bachelor who wrote :—

When the glass is down to zero,  
 And the limbs with cold are almost dead,  
 I think the man the greatest hero  
 Who dares put down his feet in bed.

Turning from food to the fair ones who cook it, we find Browne by no means in advance of the sex thought of his period, writing—“ God said, it is not good that man should be alone, let us make him an help meet for him ; that is, an help . . . for as for any other help, it had been fitter to have made another man.” Surely, Browne must have read better than this in his Chaucer ?

Ther speketh many a man of mariage,  
 That wot no more of it than wot my page ;  
 For which causes a man shuld take a wif,  
 If he ne may not liven chast his lif,  
 Take him a wif with gret devotion,  
 Because of leful procreation  
 Of children, to the honour of God above,  
 And not only for paramour, or love ;  
 And for they shulden lecherie eschue,  
 And yeld hir dette when that is due ;  
 Or for that eche of hem shuld helpen other  
 In meschefe, as a suster shal the brother,  
 And live in chastitee ful holily.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### *We Bottle the News of the World*

WITH apologies to the leviathan of Bouverie Street, I confess that my present task does not incite me to the bottling of that myriad-selling compression of current happenings. News must be at least a hundred years old to be bookish enough for my purpose. When "the red glare on Skiddaw roused the burghers of Carlisle," the sighting of the Armada was news; later, it became history, literature, poetry. It is news of such enduring quality that tempts me.

As a news editor, I claim to be the sole survivor of that fine old school which flourished away back in 1750. In those spacious days, the editor of a Leicester journal, finding news scant and hard to come by, published the first chapter of Genesis, and continued by instalments to the tenth chapter of Exodus. Then, so scoffing surmise has it, his paper died. In Fleet Street, tradition has made a mirthful myth of this most worthy editor. But I see more than a glimmer of his reality, having record in my library, under date, 1820, that his journal was "printed

in London, and sent down to Leicester for publication." And the world went very well then, my masters. It was the one period when I should have been a commercial and convincing success as an editor of :—

N  
E.W  
S

From North, East, West, and South, the solution's made,  
Each quarter brings its News of war and trade.

So, from the four quarters of my library, news, mature enough for the bottling, comes pouring in. Among my *Cromwelliana*, I have an old broadsheet which pulsates with news ; the main trend of which is that the Men of Kent are wishful to replace their orthodox divines with "painful preachers." One of these excruciating exhorters, I see, preached a wedding sermon on the text—"And she went upon the mountains, and bewailed her virginity." As Dooley might say : "'Tis a good sermon an' a hot wan'," but scarcely within the printing limit in these days of salacious soft sawder between covers.

It is safer for me to see what news there may be in my bound file of the *Diurnall*, from 1639 to 1641, a scarce item, as near the first of our newspapers as makes no difference. The *English Mercurie*, of 1588, was an undoubted forgery of about 1766, as was proved by Watts, of the British Museum. The

*Weekeley Newes*, published in London in 1622, is mentioned by the *Quarterly* as our first newspaper ; but it was a puny thing “ translated out of the Low Dutch Copie ” ; a meagre list of such happenings abroad as the Court party desired to see in print. It was not much better when it changed its title in 1626 ; the *German Intelligencer*, of 1630, and the *Swedish Intelligencer*, of 1631, followed in a similar strain of inspiration. There was no semblance of a free press in this country until King Charles and his Parliament faced each other in anger ; and our old *Diurnall* opens when the hell-broth of their dispute was seething to the flash-point of civil war.

We see the bitter crux of the whole quarrel in this, under date, April 29, 1639, a “ petition against a minister that said that all Puritanes were damned rogues . . . he hoped they would all hang in hell, and wished himself to be in hell to be their hang-man.” Think that this was spoken in zealous earnest ; and what more need be told of the inner impulse of the strife ?

Later, says our *Diurnall*—“ *Munday* began the tryall of the Earl of *Strafford* before both Houses in *Westm. Hall*, there being Scaffolds raised on both sides of the Hall, 9 degrees in width, 7 whereof were appointed for the Commons to sit on. . . . The Throne was placed for the King, but coming thither, the King sate private with the Queen and Prince,

and other ladies, in a close Gallery, made of purpose.”

Thus did Charles Stuart slink in to the trial of his favourite, whose death warrant he afterwards signed, despite “the word of a King” that he would do no such thing. Turning over a wad of pages in the *Diurnall*, we see Strafford on the Scaffold. “He shewed himself on each side, in full view of all the people, and made a short Speech, and after went to prayers ; then taking leave of all the Lords, put off his Doublet himself, turned down his shirt, and put all his hair under his Cap, and so laid himself on the block.”

The axe fell, thus died Strafford, “the one supremely able man the King had,” says Carlyle. The “great, brave, bad man” of Macaulay is more just ; but lacks a tint of the yellow streak there was in Strafford. Debauching a high-bred lady, he offered her what compensation she might desire from her father-in-law’s estate, which he commanded to be placed at her disposal. In 1626, he went to prison with Hampden. Turning renegade, he rose as high as the King could set him. Then, when Hampden was daring the storm that could not break a fibre of him, Strafford wrote to Laud :—“In good faith, were such men rightly served, they should be whipped into their right wits. . . . I still wish Mr. Hampden, and others to his likeness, were well whipped into their right senses. And if the rod be

so used that it smart not, I am the more sorry." There is something skunk-like in this gloating longing to whip weals on the bare back of his old prison-mate ; it scarcely reveals a man, even a bad one.

"Great decay of Trades," is noticed in our *Diurnall*, "divers great Merchants were lately broke for great summes of money ; among which one Mr. Abbot a younger sonne of Sir Morris Abbot was broke for 150,000 l. or more." A vast sum of money this, in those days. Twice as much, but little later, sufficed to placate the Scots when they handed over the King.

In May, the *Diurnall* prints rumour after rumour— "There was a great hubbub in the City raised (but the Authors were lost in the spreading of it) that the Houses of Parliament were in combustion, and on fire. . . ." "There was also intelligence given to the House of Commons of 1400 Barrels of Powder that were prepared in readiness, and loaden by stealth, to be carryed away by the appointment of the conspirators. . . ." "Strange conspiracy in action, against the whole body of the Kingdome, for the Landing, and bringing in of a French Army."

Amid all this rumour and turmoil, "the Queen-Mother desired that she might have a guard allowed her, going in danger of her life, by reason of some attempts lately made against her. . . ." "This day the Commons appointed some Members to go over to Lambeth, to search the Archbishop's house,

what Ammunition and Armes they could finde, and to seize upon the same." When such was the hourly state of the nation, when Crown and Church were suspect, Parliament, with sublime detachment, discussed "The Greek Postscripts of the Epistles of Timothy and Titus," and had them "cleared in Parliament," as our *Diurnall* shows, giving the original Greek of the passages on which the debate turned.

August 8th, startling news in the *Diurnall*—"Sunday by six of the clock in the morning there was a Sermon at St. Margaret's Westminster, before both Houses : after which they sate in their own Houses in Parliament all the forenoon." Parliament sitting on Sunday ! Small wonder that, towards the end of our *Diurnall*, we see mention of "waighty affaires concerning the republique." Ominous word, "republicque." Some ten years later, among my *Cromwelliana*, I see—"Declaration of the Parliament of England. Expressing the Grounds of their late Proceedings and of Setling the Present Government in the way of a Free State."

Disturbing times, these, and the country (I assert as a pressman), continued unsettled until journalism came into its fourth estate. Defoe, then De Foe, was the pioneer who first entered into possession. The *Diurnals*, with their many and multiform successors, continued in much the same style for

sixty years at least. Broadly speaking, they printed the happenings of the day, as we see in *Perfect Proceedings of State-Affaires*, June 7, 1655, which records :—

“ This day five prisoners from Newgate were hanged at Tiburn ; one drawn in a Slead for Coyning, another, one Mr. Shelly a Knights Son for Robbery, who coming down Newgate stairs stabbed himself before hee came into the Cart, hee was hanged with the rest, but it is said was dead in the Cart, long before hee came to Tiburn.”

“ Anne Firebanck (whose Husband Joseph Firebanck was on Munday last hanged for Coyning, and Shee) is condemned to be burnt for the same fact, is given by the women to bee with child, and so is reprieved. They made the Money of Tin and sold 20s. for 6s. 8 pence, many Gamesters and others bought of them.”

It must be admitted that our seventeenth-century reporter had an eye for copy. Defoe went beyond such mere stating of facts, being the first of the great ones to indulge in that elusive aspect of special pleading which amounts to journalism. He showed the world how to write and print opinions on current events, publishing them while topical interest ensured a receptive public, doing so regularly at stated intervals, and thus adding the profession of journalist to the drudgery of mankind. Perhaps, however, there may be technical error here. It is arguable that a journalist is essentially a descriptive writer, who clothes the daily nakedness of things in words that become them. Comment is more strictly an editorial prerogative ; and it is perhaps

preferable to allow that, in 1704, Defoe became the first of our newspaper editors. He was in Newgate at the time, which strengthens the editorial supposition.

Another point in favour of the editor is that the times were ripe for his advent. *The Tears of the Press, With Reflections on the Present State of England, London, 1681*, is proof of this. "And what truths, politicks, or news suffer by the press, is weekly experienced. It is nothing to kill a man this week, and, with ink, instead of *aqua vitæ*, fetch him alive the next ; to drown two admirals in one week, and to buoy them up again the next ; so that many of those pamphlets may be better termed Weekly Bills of Truth's Mortality, than faithful intelligences of affairs." Evidently, the reporting staff was in a deplorable state. The strong hand of an editor was needed ; the hour produced the man—Defoe stepped out, or would have done, had he not been in Newgate.

Tutchin's *Observer*, 1702, and Lesley's *Rehearsal*, 1704, might be cited to prove that other newspaper editors were in the field at the period when Defoe brought out his *Review*. But these productions were more after the style of the lighter section of Defoe's paper ; his *Mercure de Scandale* ; or Advice from the Scandalous Club, being a weekly History of Nonsense, Impertinence, Vice, and Debauchery. The serious



side of his paper dealt mainly with the affairs of Europe, and there is evidence that this division of interest resulted in letters of protest to the editor ; the first tricklings of that mighty flood which now roars in by every post, which washed sundry of Ruskin's essays out of serial publication, and almost submerged the first printing of Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, received with such "unqualified dissatisfaction" by readers of *Fraser's Magazine* that the publisher reduced the scale of payment.

Defoe was no truckler to those who might not like his paper, saying sturdily :—" He desires those who like but one Part, to bear with the other ; for the sake of those whose judgements approve of what they do not. Those that like both Parts, need nothing further to be said to them, than that ' He is glad, he is able to please them ! ' And those who like neither Part, are welcome to let it alone ! " On the business side of Defoe's *Review*, there is trace of that sorry trading ability which made him bankrupt at intervals throughout his life. There is no mention of price on the title-page of a copy before me ; I see no indication of advertisement revenue ; and Defoe makes no secret of his financial reward, writing : " Profit, the Press would not allow, and therein I am not deceived, for I expected none ! " Before we conclude that such was his return for editorial independence, for that fine fling at readers " welcome

to let it alone," we must allow for the record at Wroxton Abbey, which mentions—"Daniel de Foe, for his good services by the Review, has ten shillings sterling p' an<sup>m</sup> at least from every Presbyterian Minister, and many gifts from the Communion, and otherwise, as particularly a considerable sum from y<sup>e</sup> Sacrament at Leith."

Such encouraging emolument directs us to a later period, when the Press and any "good old cause" were mutually helpful—at a price. As Warburton says, referring to the *Report of the Secret Committee for Enquiring into the Conduct of the Earl of Oxford*:—"No less than £50,077 : 18 : 6 were paid to authors and printers of newspapers, between Feb. 10, 1731 and Feb. 10, 1741. One William Ansell, a perfect genius in this sort of party-writing, received for *Free Britons*, and other writings, in the space of four years, no less than £10,997 : 6 : 8 out of the Treasury."

To-morrow, off the point of my own pen, I would give any Government a cut quotation on those figures ; but I fear the market has been ruined by those upstarts who ask pesky questions in Parliament. It was different in the great days, when "ink must earn ale" was the motto of my craft. Saddened, I seek consolation in the seclusion of my library, and again immerse myself in news ripe to the hour for my bottling, finding the same in :—

*The Spirit of The*  
PUBLIC JOURNALS

For 1797

---

*To be Continued Anually*

By far the greater part of this volume consists of acknowledged extracts from the Press of the period ; but “ the Editor wishes it to be understood, that he also had some share in the original composition. He is the author of a number of the articles, which he will not point out, but which he confesses, are not likely to be classed with those of superior merit.” The smirk of the man ! His work, decidedly “ in opposition,” points to his having “ had some share ” in those long lost emoluments of a great and glorious past. Still, he knew a stunt when he saw it ; as we see from his front page feature :—

*Epigrams on the Subject of Messrs Pitt and Dundas going DRUNK to the House of Commons, on the Day when His Majesty’s Message was to be delivered relative to an immediate War with France.*

Dundas, drunk or sober, need not detain us. But Pitt, son of the Earl of Chatham, Chancellor of the Exchequer at twenty-three years of age ; a Prime Minister who passed from little more than his youth to control the destinies of England, when it seemed that the recent loss of America was but the beginning of the end. Was he *drunk* ; or does our Editor lampoon him to the vile limit ?

“Pitt carried himself through temptations with a monastic rigour. There was a time when his friends implored him for the sake of appearances, and not to flout too flagrantly the manners of the time, to show himself in public with a woman of the town.” That is the Pitt we see in Justin McCarthy’s *History of the Four Georges*. On the facing page, there is this apology :—

“It would have been impossible for Pitt, floated through a precarious childhood on floods of Oporto, to liberate his blood and judgment from the generous liquor that promised him a strength it sapped. It was no more disgrace to the austere Pitt than to the profligate Fox to come to the House of Commons visibly under the influence of much more wine than could possibly have been good for Hercules.”

Yes, drunk, beyond doubt, and how our Editor does pepper him for it :—

If the national bark in this war should be sunk  
It will be a fair answer—the pilot was drunk.

That George is high in power is justly stated,  
His very servants too are—*elevated*

*In vino veritas*, they say,  
Yet lying is so much the custom  
Of certain folks, the safest way  
Is, drunk or sober, not to trust 'em.

*The Death of Mr. Pitt* follows ; a skit of broad topical allusion—*Dissection of Mr. Pitt* comes next, and mighty coarse stuff it is—*The Funeral of Mr.*

*Pitt*, complete with Latin epitaph, is sorry satire. *Pitt's Ghost* is but little better. Shoddy, all of it.

This is much better :—" At a meeting in Downing-street yesterday, Mr. Pitt declared to several of his friends, that he found himself destitute of any ideas to meet Parliament with, for the purpose of finance, peace, or war." The upshot is the capital conceit to bring in a bill " For the Better Supplying his Majesty's Ministers with ideas in the present embarrassing posture of their affairs with the public."

It suggests a requisition, a conscription of brains, and the marvel is that it was never taken seriously, and never has been. Here is something we are looking for :—

#### REMEDY FOR WAR

Take of *Ministers of State*, a large handful ;  
*Contractors*, and  
*Profiteers*, as many of each as can be found,  
 Place them in the front of the battle.

Most excellent ; the writer might have an eye on our own times. What is this I see ? *Melancholy Effects of A General Election*. That, in 1797, mark ye, was addressed to *Mr. Baldwin*. By my prophetic soul, I bottle no more of this book ; the thing is getting uncanny.

We will turn to the *Political Register* of William Cobbett, which had a sale of 50,000 copies weekly in 1817, equalling, all things considered, a circulation

of millions in our day. How *many* millions? Ah, ask me not. I love Cobbett, he is so aggressively impartial, punching every political head in turn, a pugilist in prose, ever ready for a bout with the best man in the room or out of it. Not with the gloves, not Cobbett. Give him ring-room, he of the bare and hard fist. Watch him thud home gasping body-blows, smashing facers, until the fight ends with a jaw-jolting knock-out. Nothing less will satisfy Cobbett; he never won on points in his life. Hear him, every word dropping like well-timed shrapnel:—

“It is clear enough to me that this system will finally prevail all over England. The ‘loyal,’ indeed, may be afraid to adopt it, lest it should contain something of ‘radicalism.’ Sap-headed fools! They will find something to do, I believe, soon, besides railing against radicals. We will din ‘radical’ and ‘national faith’ in their ears till they shall dread the din as much as a dog does the sound of the bell that is tied to the whip.”

That believe me, is *Cobbett on turnips*; it is *all* he has to say to those who dare sow their own turnips in their own way. Only Cobbett could take such a splendid header off the deep-end on the cold inspiration of turnips. But, to be fair to the old bruiser, how fine, how lovable, he could be when the red was out of his eyes. He meets the gipsy charmers, notes

their complexion "is a black mixed with our English colours of pale, or red, and the features are small, like those of the girls in Sussex, and often singularly pretty. The tall girl I met at Tichbourn, who had a huckster basket on her arm, had most beautiful features. I pulled up my horse and said: 'Can you tell me my fortune, my dear?' She answered in the negative, giving me a look at the same time that seemed to say it was too late; and that, if I had been thirty years younger, she might have seen a little what she could do with me."

Ah me! that "thirty years younger." What a difference it makes when the lady is "singularly pretty."

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### *An Elizabethan Flagon*

“**T**HE Elizabethan age might be better named the beginning of the smoking era,” says Barrie. That is well enough for our purpose ; smoking and flagons have much in common. Each has a great sailor-name behind it. Noah for the ruby flagon, Raleigh for the soothing pipe of herb divine. A seasoned smoker, Sir Walter, as we see from a peep at “*Raleigh’s Tobacco Box*, covered with red leather, and opened at the top, with a Hinge. In the Inside, there was a Cavity for a Receiver of Glas or Metal, which might hold a Pound of Tobacco ; and from the Edge of the Receiver at Top, a circular Stay or Collar, with Holes in it to plant the Tobacco about, with six or eight Pipes to smoke it in.”

The spacious times of great Elizabeth befitted a brave knight who faced his smoking with a pound of tobacco before him, and six or eight pipes to help him whiff it away in pleasant company. “The use of this Herb,” says a reference of the period, “soon became of such vogue in Queen Elizabeth’s Court, that some of the great Ladies, as well as the Noble-



men therein, would not scruple to take a Pipe sometimes very sociably." This custom may solve a problem of some delicacy presented by Lord Bacon, who observes in his curious little book of *Apothegms* :—

“ When Queen *Elizabeth* had advanced *Raleigh*, she was one day playing on the Virginals, and my Lord of Oxford with another Nobleman stood by ; when it happened that the Ledge before the Jacks was taken away, so that they were seen, whereupon that Lord and the other Nobleman smil'd and whisper'd a little ; the Queen mark'd it, and would needs know, *what was the matter ?* ”

Helped by our old authority, we see they were enjoying a friendly pipe together “ very sociably,” that was all, and only the anti-tobacco mind could make worse of it. No true smoker would stoop so low—“ The man who smokes, thinks like a sage and acts like a good Samaritan,” and will readily allow that nothing could be more natural than smiles and whispers from the courtiers, when Elizabeth was discovered smoking her pipe as her beautiful fingers tapped harmony from the virginal. A risible notion insists that we may accept this incident as the first smoking concert hinted at in our history ; but Walter Savage Landor suggests a line of surmise far less innocent.

*Elizabeth.* Excuse my maidenly sighs, sweet cousin.

*La Matte (aside).* No sighs of that description have escaped her since she was fourteen. The first and last of them caught the sails of the High Admiral, and cast him on the breakers.

Raleigh cannot be implicated in this Landor inferential. Born in 1552, he was a babe in arms when Elizabeth, born in 1533, was old enough to have been his mother. Her great High Admiral, the Howard who drubbed the Armada, was born in 1536, an impossible date for Landor. This leaves him to make what he can of Thomas, the grand old fighting Howard, who was verging on sixty when Elizabeth was a girl of fourteen. It would seem that Landor's history is hasty here ; after the manner of his reference to Cromwell, as seen in his suggested :—

*Inscription for a Statue at St. Ives*

OLIVER CROMWELL,

a good son, a good husband, a good father,  
 a good citizen, a good ruler  
 both in war and peace,  
 was born in this town.

To know his public acts,  
 open the History of England,  
 where it exhibits in few pages  
 (alas too few !)  
 the title of Commonwealth.

Very fine, except that St. Ives happens to be within comfortable halting distance, as small country towns agree, of the borough of Huntingdon, where, in the parish register of All Saints' Church, there is this entry—"Anno Domini, 1599. Oliver, son of Robert Cromwell and Elizabeth, born on the 25th

day of April, and Baptised on the 29th of the same month." Above this entry is written "England's plague for 5 years"; and, in truth, to this day that is all they know or care of Cromwell in sleepy old Huntingdon, where he was born.

That Raleigh was the complete courtier to Elizabeth admits of no argument; but there is clear record that his heart was bestowed elsewhere. "There was among the Queen's Maids of Honour a beautiful young lady," says an old account of the happening, "named *Elizabeth*, Daughter of Sir *Nicholas Throgmorton*, an able statesman and ambassador. With this lady, *Raleigh* had, it seems, an Amour; and, as he was a man of nervous Address, won her heart to the last Favour inclusive." So, so! but he married her like a gentleman, and was a good husband to her. His last thoughts were of her, and are still to be read in the beautiful and affecting letter he wrote after his condemnation:—"You shall receive (my dear wife) my last words in these my last lines; my love I send you, that you may keep when I am dead, and my counsel, that you may remember it when I am no more. . . . My dear wife, farewell; bless my boy, pray for me, and let my true God hold you both in his arms. . . . I sued for my life, but (God knows) it was for you and yours that I desired it: for know it (my dear wife) your child is the child of a true man, who, in his own respect,



for eight hours together ; and then being shot into the body with a musket, as the wound was dressing, he was again shot into the head, and his surgeon at the same time wounded to death. Still the fight continued, and as fast as the *Spaniards* were beaten off by the *Revenge*, others came in their places ; so that by morning she had substained, for fifteen hours together, the vollies, boardings, and entries of fifteen several ships of war, and repulsed them all ; besides the rest which battered her loose and at a distance. . . .

“ Now was to be seen nothing but the naked hull of a ship, and that almost a skeleton, having received 800 shot of great artillery, and some under water ; her deck covered with the limbs and carcasses of forty valiant men, the rest all wounded, and weltering in, or covered with their own blood ; her masts all beaten over-board, all her tackle cut asunder, her upper works razed, and all in effect levelled with the water ; incapable of any further management or motion, but what the billows gave her. *Greenville*, now seeing their distress irreparable, commanded the ship to be sunk, that the *Spaniards* might not carry a splinter home as a trophy of their dear-bought victory.”

Oldys, when the *Cecil Letters* were in preparation, made a note which Landor must have missed ; “ find that they are inclined to leave

out the letters and testimonies of Princess Elizabeth's girlish frolicks with Ambrose Dudley," he writes. These were published in the *Burghley State Papers*, and reveal that the amatory nobleman paid his addresses to Elizabeth with so much warmth that the Council deemed it expedient to interfere. Later, when Elizabeth was Queen and a woman of twenty-six, we see deferential counsel of a contrary tendency. In 1559, her faithful Commons made mention of the "immortality your Majesty may give to the English, if (as your humane nature, age, beauty, and fortune doe require) you will take some man to your husband." Elizabeth parried this poetically by avowing: "I have already joynd my selfe in marriage to an husband, namely, the Kingdome of England," and ended her royal speech with this snap of defiant feminism. "To me it shall be a full satisfaction both for the memoriall of my name, and for my glory also, if when I shall let my last breath, it be ingraven on my Marble Tombe, Here Lyeth Elizabeth, which raigned a Virgin and dyed a Virgin."

Shakespeare supports this peroration. Wary of the tigress in her, he makes but one named reference to Elizabeth. She is the infant in that royal christening scene which ends the splendour of his *King Henry VIII*, and gives these prophetic lines to Cramner, Archbishop of Canterbury:—

“ Would I had known no more ! but she must die,  
 She must, the saints must have her ; yet a virgin,  
 A most unspotted lily shall she pass  
 To the ground, and all the world shall mourn her.”

Malone says, “ *King Henry VIII* was written, I believe, in 1601,” and supports the criticism that the above passage was added in 1613, after Shakespeare had quitted the stage. That may well have been so. Elizabeth died in 1603, even panegyric conveying presage of death must have been dangerous while she had breath in her body. Her horror of death was so pitiful that, when fatal sickness struck her, she died “cruel hard,” as say the old death-crones. Her Lord High Admiral was the only man in all England who dare persuade her to take to her bed for the last time. Her dying was so grimly reluctant that she left the succession of the crown in doubt until she was too far gone to speak. As her attendant lords stood round her bed waiting for the end, the Queen, too near death for speech, “was asked by Mr. Secretary in this sort, ‘We beseech your majesty, if you remain in your former resolution, and that you would have the king of Scots to succeed you in your kingdom, show some sign unto us’: whereat, *suddenly heaving herself upwards in her bed, and putting her arms out of bed, she held her hands jointly over her head in the manner of a crown* ; whence, as they guessed, she signified that

she did not only wish him the kingdom, but desire continuance of his estate ; after which they departed, and the next morning she died."

That was the end, as recorded by Petyt from the account of an eye-witness, probably Cecil. "The speeches made for Elizabeth on her death-bed are all forged," remarks the Earl of Cork and Orrery, in his edition of *Cary's Memoirs* ; and how much else concerning her was also "forged" ? In the *Add.MSS.* is a note, said to be in the writing of Ives, to the effect—"I have heard it confidently asserted, that Queen Elizabeth was with child by the Earl of Essex, and that she was delivered of a child at Kenilworth Castle, which died soon after its birth, was interred at Kenilworth, and had a stone put over it, inscribed '*Silentium.*'" In about the fifth year of her reign, as is proved by depositions taken before justices in Wiltshire, there were rumours "that the queen had been gotten with child by the Lord Robert," the Dudley who was afterwards Earl of Leicester, and who had fled the realm in consequence. The curious in such matters may trace vague reports of her purported children being reared in Ireland, Venice, and elsewhere. The subject has its literature, or something very like it ; but there is more significance in what emerges from general history ; from what is stated there without specific intent of touching the question.



Glancing back again at 1559, when Parliament supplicated the Queen to marry and assure the succession, it is informing to note that the Peers held aloof from this petition, feeling that the royal choice might fall on one of them, and not desiring to appear anxious to influence it in favour of any individual. The Commons indicate to her the utmost freedom of choice: "some man to be your husband" is all they pray for; leaving Elizabeth to make her own man royal on the principle—"A woman that gets hold of a bit of manhood is like one of those Chinese wood-carvers who work on any odd, fantastic root that comes to hand, and, if it is only bulbous above and bifurcated below, will always contrive to make a man—such as he is—out of it." So, with all the blue blood in the nation waiting for but the lift of a finger, with her known favourites expectant, Elizabeth might have picked and shaped a man to her liking, had she a liking for any. Instead, ablaze with more than mere temper, she flings a virgin vow at the representatives of her people.

Why did she do this? Why, never mind the State, did she so act against the common nature of flesh, of that flesh which is woman at six-and-twenty? Sir Robert Naunton, in his *Fragmenta Regalia*, 1694, depicts Elizabeth in "about the twenty-sixth year of her age, in which (as for Externals) she was full Blown. . . . She was of Personage Tall, of Hair

and Complexion Fair, and therewith well favoured, but high nosed, of limbs and feature neat, and which added to the Lustre of those external graces, of Stately and Majestick Comportment." Nothing here, it seems, to stay a royal consort ; but Camden hints at the truth when he names the day that " men cursed Huic, the Queen's phyician, for dissuading her from marriage, for I know not what female infirmity." This theme has been argued to prove that Elizabeth, herself incapable of bearing a successor to the throne, was murderously jealous of the much-married Mary Queen of Scots. Elizabeth, whose dread of death we have seen, linked marriage and death in her own mind with a force which kept her from the one until the other claimed her. Urging her to marriage, she said, was " asking nothing less than wishing her to dig her grave before she was dead." That she, saying and knowing this, bore children in love-lock, can only be swallowed by those who accept with avidity any " piece of scandal invented by a maid of honour centuries ago, and repeated to an obscure writer by Queen Elizabeth's housekeeper," as says D'Israeli, the bookish Paul Pry ; who clinches the matter with emphasis in this extract from his historical work—" There is little doubt that Elizabeth felt the amorous passion in an extreme degree ; particularly for her favourite the Earl of Essex. *Every reader* does not know that that passion *could*

*not be gratified* ; there were physical reasons against it ; *her amours would have cost her her life.*" Scandal allows nothing for this, and it moves Byron to pique :—

Love had made Catherine make each lover's fortune,  
 Unlike our own half-chaste Elizabeth,  
 Whose avarice all disbursements did importune,  
 If history, the grand liar, ever saith  
 The truth ; and though grief her old age might shorten,  
 Because she put a favourite to death,  
 Her vile, ambiguous method of flirtation,  
 And stinginess, disgrace her sex and station.

*Don Juan*, Canto the Ninth.

History returns a true bill when Elizabeth is charged with avarice, Ewald telling us of the Armada—  
 “ Sadder reading there is not than the piteous moans for provisions, to be met with in the State Papers of this date, from the captains of the different men-of-war then watching the Channel for the protection of England. Wages were in arrears, every farthing of extra expenditure had to be rigidly accounted for to the Queen, whilst sailors brought on shore sick or dying had no place to receive them.” “ It would grieve any man's heart,” writes Howard, “ to see men who had served so valiantly die so miserably ” ; and he chased the Spaniards until beaten back because only a few coarse beans were aboard to satisfy his hunger ; his men, starving, and driven to unmentionable extremity for need of water. Drake protests of the ill policy “ to hazard a kingdom with saving

a little charge." "Our policy at home," writes Captain Whyte to Walsyngham, "hath bereaved us of the famousest victory that ever our nation had at sea."

Plucky but stingy is Elizabeth's war record; her parsimony is fair game for Byron, but the sex comparison in his verse is grotesque. Elizabeth and Catherine are at the antipodes of the amoristic. Catherine stands out supreme as the crowned and jewelled courtesan of history. Her list of men-mates is as undeniable as any stud-book; Potemkin, when he tired of her, turning over strapping fellows to appoint a series of successors. Gregory Orloff was before him, of course, and Venus only knows how many more. "Fifty men," is Landor's estimate, when he introduces Catherine chatting gaily with the Princess Dashkof, listening to the blood dripping from the corpse of the husband she murdered, saying gaily: "I possess in perfection the higher part of men, and—to a friend I may say it—the most amiable part of women."

Elizabeth, in frigid contrast, cannot be proved "half-chaste," be the state possible, either on known facts, or recorded circumstances worthy of credit. Much of her behaviour can be gossiped into the salacious interpretation complete; and has been to an extent which Sheridan made proverbial in his "No scandal about Queen Elizabeth, I hope?" It is tempting to talk so of a queen, but another matter

to prove it, as we see by the futility of *The Trial of Queen Caroline, Consort of George IV, on a charge of adulterous intercourse with her Menial Servant, Bartolomeo Bergami*, London, 1820. More was sworn to at that fruitless trial than can be laid against Elizabeth on testimony any Court would look at. Despite this, even titular hint of scandal has sufficed for notoriety, as we see in *The Secret History of the Most Renowned Q. Elizabeth and the E. of Essex*. By a Person of Quality, London, 1702. The first page has the intriguing heading, *The Earl of Essex or, the Amours of Queen Elizabeth*. My copy is not a first edition; Cologne, 1695, is the earliest mentioned by Lowndes; and I have seen at least one other edition, "adorned with cuts," and of a date I forget. Despite its title, the nature of the work is well expressed by the remark of a literary lady, something of a witty puss, who borrowed my copy, returned it soon after, and said: "Naturally, I hoped for the worst, and I *was* disappointed." Obvious fiction from beginning to end, there is "no more in it" than might, if the English was modernized, go to the making of a gift-book for school-girls. It is a love story moulded on the perfectly proper, and ending on a tragic note because Essex did not return her ring in time to save his life, or because the Countess of Nottingham concealed the love-token, until she confessed her perfidy to Elizabeth on her death-bed, when, so our "Person

of Quality ” has it, the Queen “ was within very little of making the dying Countess feel the Violence of her Resentment.”

“ ‘Wretch!’ cries she with Looks full of Indignations, ‘*what remorse hast thou thus expos’d to me. Whether Heaven will Pardon thy Crimes, I know not, I am sure I shall never forget them.*’ ” This penny novelette outburst is as good or as bad as anything between the covers of the dingy little book before me. That ring story, the personal symbol of sentiment in the “amour,” has been taken for granted by both history and fiction, if there is much difference between them as commonly written. Yet there is considerable reason for placing it among the legends, reckoning it as a touch of romance inspired by those old stories in which love-tokens often play a similar part. Camden, writing some dozen years after the death of the Queen, makes no mention of the ring in his *Annales* of Elizabeth, saying of the end of Essex: “His perverse contumacie, who scorned to crave pardon, and had spoken openly that he could not live without the Queenes destruction, did so sharpen her to severity, that shortly after she sent commandment, againe by *Darcie*, that he should be put to death.” Clarendon derides the ring incident, confessing himself “nothing satisfied with that loose report, which has crept into our discourse, that shortly after his miserable end (which indeed deserved compassion

from all hearts) I know not upon what unseasonable delivery of a ring or jewel by some lady of the court, the queen expressed much reluctancy for his death." The arithmetic of the matter supports such comment. Elizabeth was sixty-eight years of age when Essex was sent to the block at thirty-four. The same point emerges from a note by Hume of an amorous epistle sent by Raleigh to Elizabeth. Sir Walter makes poetic play of his affection for her charms, compares her with Venus and Diana, writes as he might have done forty years before, as Elizabeth happened to be an old maid of sixty at the time.

Behold another Elizabethan :—

His bushy beard, and shoe-strings green,  
 His high-crowned hat and satin doublet,  
 Moved the stout heart of England's Queen ;  
 Though Pope and Spaniard could not trouble it !

Hatton, " My grave Lord Keeper," is the favourite here, caught by the poet as " the Seal and Maces danced before him," and liked by Elizabeth for his graceful person and fine dancing. She was a queen who demanded handsome men as part of her royal state. Her body-guard consisted " of the tallest and stoutest men that can be found in all England, being carefully selected for this service." And, on fit occasion, brave was the show she made of her regal sway, as may be seen in old Hentzner's word

picture of 1598 ; drawn, be it noted, with all “ warts, humours, and blemishes ” :—

“ First went Gentlemen, Barons, Earls, Knights of the Garter, all richly dressed and bare-headed ; next came the Chancellor, bearing the seals in a silk purse, between two, one of which carried the Royal sceptre, the other the sword of state in a red scabbard, studded with golden Fleurs-de-Lis, the point upwards ; next came the Queen, in the fifty-sixth year of her age (as we were told), very majestic ; her face oblong, fair, but wrinkled ; her eyes small, yet black and pleasant ; her nose a little hooked, her lips narrow, and her teeth black (a defect the English seem subject to, from their too great use of sugar) ; she had in her ears two very rich pearls with drops ; she wore false hair, and that red ; upon her head she had a small crown, reported to have been made of some of the gold of the celebrated Lunebourg table ; her bosom was uncovered, as all the English ladies have it till they marry ; and she had on a necklace of exceeding fine jewels ; her hands were small, her fingers long, and her stature neither tall nor low ; her air was stately, her manner of speaking mild and obliging. That day she was dressed in white silk, bordered with pearls of the size of beans, and over it a mantle of black silk shot with silver threads ; her train was very long, the end of it borne by a marchioness, she had an oblong collar of gold and



jewels. As she went along, in all this state and magnificence, she spoke very graciously, first to one, then to another. . . .

“ Wherever she turned her face as she was going along, everybody fell down on their knees. The ladies of the court followed next to her, very handsome and well shaped, and for the most part dressed in white. She was guarded on each side by the Gentlemen Pensioners, fifty in number, with gilt battle-axes. In the anti-chamber next the hall, where we were, petitions were presented to her, and she received them most graciously, which occasioned the exclamation of ‘ *God save the Queen Elizabeth!* ’ She answered it with, ‘ *I thancke youe myne good peupel* ’ ”

How pleasing to fancy one of those fine Gentlemen Pensioners, retired at last to his country content :—

With an old hall hung about with guns, pikes, and bows,  
 With old swords and bucklers, which have borne many shrewd  
 blows ;  
 With an old frizado coat to cover his worship’s trunk-hose  
 And a cup of old sherry to comfort his copper nose,  
     Like an Old Courtier of the Queen’s,  
     And the Queen’s Old Courtier.

Courtly times, those of Good Queen Bess, but what did it all mean to the inner woman of her ? Before we pass to her most renowned favourite,

remember what we have seen by lifting a tiny corner of the veil drawn over the face of history ; and do not forget that Elizabeth, herself entitled to a place among our lesser poets, wrote :—

I grieve ; and dare not show my discontent !  
 I love ; and yet am forced to seem to hate !  
 I do, yet dare not say, I ever meant !  
 I seem stark mute ; but inwardly do prate !  
 I am, and not ; I freeze, and yet am burned ;  
 Since from myself, my other self I turned !

Leicester, Elizabeth's greatest favourite, enters the world of books as the central figure of the most celebrated libel known to literary annals. This is *Leycesters Common-wealth : Conceived, Spoken, and published with most earnest protestation of all dutifull good will and affection towards this Realme ; For whose good onely is it made common to many.* Job 20, 27. The heavens shall reveal his iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against him. Printed, 1641. So reads the title-page of my copy. The book first appeared as *The Copie of a Letter wryten by a Master of Arte of Cambridge to his Friend in London, concerning some Talke past of late between two worshipful and graue Men, about the present State, and some Proceedinges of the Erle of Leycester and his Friendes in England,* 1584. Ant. Wood remarks :—"The first edition, and perhaps the second, was printed beyond the seas ; and most of the copies being sent into England

bound, with the outside of the leaves coloured with green, the book was commonly called, *Father Person's Green Coat*. 'Tis the same book with that entitled *Leicester's Commonwealth*, Lond. 1641."

Elizabeth, by royal proclamation, ordered "severe and due punishment" on all who so much as "kepte" a copy of the book. "Testifinge in her conscience before God unto you, that her highnes not onelie knoweth, in assured certaintie, the books & libells against the said erle to be most malicious, false & sclanderous; & such as none but a . . . devill himself could dreame to be trew; but also thinkethe to be, of the fullness of malice, subtilie contrived to the note & discreditt of her princlie government of this realme. . . . And so we bid you hartelie farewell. From the courte at Greenewich, this xx. of June, 1585."

The book, thus advertised into notoriety, tacks more sins on Leicester's back than ever Christian staggered under. Cast in dialogue form, it amounts to a Newgate Calendar of biography, charging the earl with a catalogue of assorted enormities—"Deepe dissimulation"—"Disposition to ramper for a kingdome"—"Hatred to her Majesty"—"Intollerable treason"—"The impudency of Judas"—"The poisoning of the Erle of Essex"—"of Cardinall Chatilian"—"of Mistris Draykot"—"The poisoning of Sir Nicholas in a salet"—"of the Lady

Lennox"—“Most variable dealing with women in contracts and marriages”—“The intollerable licentiousness of Leicesters carnality.” And so on, and so forth, often dipping into the unprintable, proceeds our Jesuit father, consigning Leicester to perdition with a sin on his soul for each hair on his horse—never mind his head.

What the old scandal-monger might have written of Queen Elizabeth is unthinkable, but not one of his many mentions of her even hint at her personal honour as in any way besmirched by Leicester. In matters of State, she is represented as allowing him too much scope and power, relying on him as her right hand man, and he such a monster, so royally and wrongly supported by “the singular benignity and most bountifull good nature of her Majesty, who measuring other men by her own Heroicall and Princely sincerity ; cannot easily suspect a man so much bounden to her grace, as he is, nor remove her confidence from the place, where she has heaped so infinite benefits.”

Policy doubtless explains why Parsons thus stayed his hand from attacking the private character of Elizabeth. His object was to render Leicester odious in her sight, but he failed ; how complete his failure was we see soon after, in 1588, when “the Lord Admirall of *England* being certainly advised by *Flemming* a Captaine of a Pinnace, that

the *Spanish* Fleet was entred into the *Brittish* Sea and was seene neare the point called *The Lizard*, towed the *English* Fleet forth into the deepe Sea, not without great difficultie, certainly with singular diligence, and admirable alacritie of the Saylers."

At this hour, when the peril of a priest-ridden England was very near, when a pall of black bigotry hung ready to fall and smother liberty in body and soul, Elizabeth caught the torch Boadicea flung across the centuries. Her Tudor blood was up. Truncheon in hand, she reviewed her troops, heartened them with speeches which stir the blood even in cold print, and made such a brave business of it that she had strong bent towards heading her army in person in the field. This could not be, but Elizabeth was an imperious woman to handle, dangerously difficult to turn when she had set her heart on a task she saw to her hand. Then Leicester addressed her in a strain that might have cost any other man in the country his head. "Now for your person," he wrote, "being the most deinty and sacred thing we have in this world to care for, much more for advyce to be geven in the direction of yt, a man must tremble whan he thinks of yt ; spetyally finding your Majesty to have that princely courage to transport yourself to your utmost confines of your realme, to mete your enmyes, and to defend your subjectes.

I can not, most dere Queene, consent to that, for uppon your well doing consists all."

Accordingly, Elizabeth retired to Havering, where she was guarded by a picked force officered by noblemen. We may be thankful that our sea-dogs bit and worried so famously well that the land forces, under Leicester, had no need to fire a shot ; but his power at the time shows the influence he had over Elizabeth, despite the vitrolic lampooning of Parsons. This was true to his end, which came in the September of the same year. A very sick man, he wrote to Elizabeth, asking after her health, "the chiefest thing in the world I pray for." His letter is dated August 29, and addressed "To y<sup>e</sup> Q. most excellent Ma<sup>te</sup>." Beneath, Elizabeth has written in her own hand the pathetic comment, "His last letter."

## CHAPTER NINE

### *A Bottle of Booksellers*

THIS is a lickerish bottle to fill. Bookseller's catalogues might help, but are refined beyond my purpose. "If you are troubled with pride of accuracy, and would have it completely taken out of you, print a catalogue," observes Henry Stevens. Compilers of book catalogues feel this so deeply, are such humble devotees of the cult of accuracy, that I would as lief distil the wording of a five-pound note as attempt to bottle their work. Wheatley's *How to Catalogue a Library* has been in my possession for quite a number of years. My perusal of it convinced me that I ought to catalogue my books; the conviction grows as I get older; I wish the catalogue did—I have yet to begin it; but I mean to do so some day.

The result of this procrastination is that the spirit I need for my bottle of booksellers is diffused all over my library. Booksellers, I find, are an elusive subject; their evolution from lower forms of literary life, such as authors, is an obscure study, a fit theme for a professor of more sciences than I should know if I

saw them all neatly labelled in a glass case. But of this I am sure, taking them as a business fraternity, book-sellers are of the royal and antient.

Chaucer, as bookseller of his own poetry, received from his king, among more substantial emoluments, "a pitcher of wine daily in the Port of London, to be delivered by the Butler of England." Spencer, if Landor is to be trusted, was paid as only Elizabeth could reward. "Go, convey unto him these twelve silver spoons, with the apostles on them, gloriously gilded ; and deliver into his hand these twelve large golden pieces, sufficing for the yearly maintenance of another horse and groom. Besides which, set open before him, with due reverence this Bible, wherein he may read the mercies of God towards those who waited in patience for his blessing ; and this pair of crimson silk hose, which thou knowest I have worn only thirteen months, taking heed that the heel-piece be put into good and sufficient restoration, at my sole charges, by the Italian woman nigh the pollard elm at Charing Cross."

We may give that passage its date to a year. It must refer to 1590, when, with dedication to Queen Elizabeth, Spencer published his *Faerie Queene, fashioning XII moral Vertues*. And, to help his sales account, England's Arch-Poet hoped for more than his royal mistress was either minded or advised to bestow. "The queen," says Granger, "was far from



having a just sense of his merit ; and Lord Burleigh, who prevented her giving him a hundred pounds, seems to have thought the lowest clerk in his office a more deserving person. He died in want of bread." His misfortune was that he lived too near the period when, ere printing came, bookseller-authors took what they could get for their work ; the published price being precisely as much or as little as their noble customers felt inclined to give. This is shown in one of Lydgate's manuscripts, which depicts him, kneeling humbly, as he presents his book to the Earl of Salisbury. Whatever Spencer may have hoped for, his requital was poor, Elizabeth rewarding her poets on much the same scale as her naval rates of pay. Spencer must have felt sore and sorry that he ever wrote :—

Of fair Elisa . . .

That blessed wight !

The flower of virgins ! may she flourish long

In princely plight !

For she is Syrinx ! daughter, without spot ;

Which Pan, the Shepherds' God, of her begot.

So sprang her grace

Of heavenly race !

No mortal blemish may her blot !

As a seller of printed books, Caxton stands first in our annals. He had a many-sided personality. He was an author by right of English stoutly good,

“ In France was I never, and was born and learned mine English in Kent, in the Weald, where I doubt not is spoken as broad and rude English as in any place in England.” He was a translator, and that of the first book printed in English, his *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*. He gave us punctuation, by introducing the Roman pointing as used in Italy. His research allowed him to make such additions to the *Polychronicon* as—“ It was the custom with the Anglo-Norman race to celebrate a solemn dirge, and to mourn for the decease of foreign princes.” He corrected the works of his press, even made his own ink ; there is vastly more in Caxton than is conveyed by the bald statement that he was the father of our printing.

As a bookseller, Caxton was astute ; the mercer training of his apprentice days is plain in this—“ I have submitted myself to translate into English the ‘ Legend of Saints,’ called ‘ Legenda aurea ’ in Latin ; and William, Earl of Arundel, desired me—and promised to take a reasonable quantity of them—and sent me a worshipful gentleman, promising that my said lord should during my life give and grant me a yearly fee, that is to note, a buck in summer and a doe in winter.” This seems to be a bold move towards a subscribed edition, and helps us to understand why Caxton prospered until, as he approached the great age of four score, still working, he handled

his last page—" Thus endeth the most virtuous history of the devout and right-renowned lives of the holy fathers living in the desert, worthy of remembrance to all well-disposed persons, which hath been translated out of the French into English by William Caxton, of Westminster, late dead, and finished at the last day of his life."

After Caxton, we see printer, publisher, bookseller, gradually branching away, each towards specialization in his own sphere, but always with a propensity to cling to the original type. Authors continued to write, much as usual, and managed to exist somehow until now, when they sell their work to a publisher, or perish in the attempt. Publishers are therefore useful to society, which would otherwise be plagued by authors reciting their works for a living. Few authors could hope to earn a crust in this way ; reading aloud is a severe strain on the holding power of literary work. Yet it is the one test the great unpublished usually invites, hankering "to read to you a little thing of my own," which publishers have conspired to reject. This may be delightful to some sweet young creature who believes she is loved by a neglected genius : but is otherwise only equitable as practised by that pleasant tyrant, mentioned by Horace, who obliged his defaulting debtors to hear him read his own compositions by way of commutation.

Publishers are also useful as accessory to the

selling of books by the trade, a commendable habit which releases an author from the inconvenience of hawking his books from door to door, as did Myles Davies, a mendicant author, who, in 1716, wrote "with an occasional freedom of thought, in criticising and comparing the parallel qualifications of the most eminent authors and their performances, both in MS. and print, both at home and abroad." Myles Davies as bookseller is well placed in the *Calamities of Authors*, where he complains of "Those squeeze-farthing and hoard-penny ignoramus doctors, who formed excuses for not accepting my books; or would they receive them, but give nothing for them; or else deny they had them, or remembered anything of them; and so gave me nothing."

"Nothing," seems to have been current payment for authors throughout the ages. "How much do you think Homer got for his *Iliad*? or Dante for his *Paradise*? only bitter bread and salt, and going up and down other people's stairs." What payment was made to those who gave us the authorized version of our Bible? Boyes performed not only his part in the translation, but also the part assigned to another, "with great reputation, though with no profit, for he had no allowance but his commons. He was also one of the six who met at Stationers' Hall to revise the whole; which task they went through in nine months, having each from the

Company of Stationers, during that time, thirty shillings a week." This, we must note in fairness, happened before the arrival of publishing in a modern sense ; an event almost as recent as the middle of the nineteenth century, when the old system of booksellers publishing on their own account, which gave to the world everything Johnson, Goldsmith, and a host of others wrote, was finally swept away. This old-style business had a word of its own in our language. Bailey's *Dictionary*, 1770, defining "conger" as "a Society of Booksellers who have a joint Stock in Trade, or agree to print Books in Copartnership." "Congre," to "agree together" is bracketed with this ; but "conger," meaning the sea-eel, has no place in Bailey, a point I mention to show that the "conger" connection with the trade, although fairly ancient, has no double meaning.

Publisher-booksellers are far older than Bailey's reference ; they had their trade association in ancient Rome, where the first glimmer of copyright may perhaps be detected ; and where, incidentally, Cicero "remaindered" his unsold works. In Greece, during the eighth century, Greek itself had to meet the requirements of the trade ; when the *tachygraphoi*, swift writers, adapted the Greek letters by modifying the uncial character ; thus facilitating the copying of classics for which the bookstalls of Athens waited.

Publishers and booksellers of to-day share these

historic traditions between them ; but, if we go back far enough, booksellers must be allowed clear precedence. The father of all good booksellers was a swarthy Assyrian who dealt in Chaldean tablets on the plains of Mesopotamia, and opened his shop about 4000 B.C. The stamped tablets he bought and sold were "set" by impressing cakes of soft clay with engraved blocks ; and, in the vital sense of facility of reproduction, were more truly books than anything the world saw again until 1454, the earliest known date of any printed piece. Samples of the remaining stock of the Assyrian booksellers may be seen in the British Museum. As books in a state of being, they are interesting crudities. As literature, they translate into Bible English, and, with due reverence, Bible thought ; witness the version quoted by Shaylor :—

Father, long-suffering and full of forgiveness, whose hand upholds  
the life of all mankind :

In heaven who is supreme ? Thou alone art supreme.

In the earth, who is supreme ? Thou alone art supreme.

As for Thee, Thy Will is made known in heaven, and the angels bow  
down their faces.

As for Thee, Thy Will is declared on earth and the green herbs  
grow.

As for Thee, who can explain Thy Will, who can rival it ?

Despite the formal divorce of the nineteenth century, publishing, as we know it to-day, is inseparable

from bookselling so far as both are part of the obstetrics of literature. There are occasions when publishing is more antecedent, so to speak, being under frequent suspicion of parentage, the proof in such cases depending on the success or otherwise of a book. For, should it succeed, the publisher may have suggested it, very probably did ; should it fail, the author suggested it to the publisher—invariably. Intrinsically, however, publishing is a business with possibilities, too often neglected, of idealization towards higher and better things. The glory which publishing may attain was seen when Croker, then Secretary to the Admiralty, made a characteristic suggestion that he might edit Boswell for the house of Murray, remarking, “ Since Boswell’s death, Mr. Malone has superintended two or three editions, and Mr. Chalmers one ; but I must say that Malone has done little and Chalmers next to nothing.”

To this, at a quarter to midnight on January 9th, 1829, John Murray sat him down to pen a reply in Albemarle Street. His letter beams with scholarly appreciation of the “ admirable view ” of Croker, and concludes : “ With regard to the business part, I should prefer publishing (at least at first) the original work, with the insertions and notes as proposed by you ; and for these additions, notes, and editorship, I shall be happy to give, as something in the way of remuneration, the sum of one thousand guineas.”

It does me good to lean back and look at that. Croker nowhere hints at sixpence. Murray, patrician publisher, is happy to bestow "the sum of one thousand guineas"; a lordly detail, nothing more, merely an incidental reminder that, as between friends and gentlemen, "something in the way of remuneration" will not presume on the fitness of things. Such feeling, such a gesture, is altogether in the grand manner, inspiring publishers to deeds worth living for, reminding them what knight-errantry they may perform, and obliterating the bar sinister of the publisher in *Lavengro*, who told George Borrow: "I expect you, sir, to compile six volumes of Newgate lives and trials, each volume to contain by no manner of means less than one thousand pages; the remuneration which you will receive when the work is completed will be fifty pounds, which is likewise intended to cover any expenses you may incur in procuring books, papers, and manuscripts necessary for the compilation."

"Sir," said I, rubbing my hands, "you are very kind," was the answer Borrow gave. Concerning Croker, we have no such record, no hint even of a suggestion that something on account would be acceptable. This was shabby requital to Murray, but we need not marvel that Croker was boor enough to ignore the needful etiquette of an author's calling; he was cad enough to be the guest of a nobleman and



slash him in print as he drew his feet from under my lord's mahogany ; he was reputed malignant enough to go a hundred miles through sleet and snow in a December night, to search a parish register for the sake of showing that a man was illegitimate, or a woman older than she said she was. As a critic, among other enormities, Croker savaged "Endymion" with the glee of a Benin priest revelling in human crucifixion, writing of Keats, "if that be his real name, for we almost doubt that any man in his senses would put his real name to such a rhapsody." This appeared in the *Quarterly* ; the brutality of it may have hastened Keats to his grave at six-and-twenty, or may not. Byron thought that it did :—

Who killed John Keats ?  
 " I," said the *Quarterly*,  
 So savage and tartarly ;  
 " 'Twas one of my feats."

When Croker's Boswell appeared in 1831, Macaulay wrote in the *Edinburgh Review* : " We are sorry to be obliged to say that the merits of Mr. Croker's performance are on a par with those of a certain leg of mutton on which Dr. Johnson dined, while travelling from London to Oxford, and which he, with characteristic energy, pronounced to be ' as bad as bad could be ; ill fed, ill killed, ill kept, and ill dressed.' This edition is ill compiled, ill arranged, ill written,

and ill printed." Macaulay continues to slash away like a lusty hedger in frosty February ; and, despite the political bias which really occasioned the attack, it is not unpleasing to see Croker wincing under the flail, which thumps, and thumps, and thumps, seeming never to beat out a grain of good wheat.

The odd thing is that Murray paid Croker more for editing than Boswell would have taken for the original rights of his book. Pressed for ready money, Boswell wrote to Malone, in 1791, "I am really tempted to accept of the £1000 for my life of Johnson." Again, less than a month later : "I believe in my present frame I should accept even of £500, for I suspect that were I now to talk to Robinson, I should find him not disposed to give £1000." Had he but known of Croker's remuneration and Boswell's figures, what play Macaulay would have made of such inside information, after the manner of his period, which mixed spite and personalities with literary criticism in a style now as dead, and as forgotten as only back numbers of the *Quarterly* and *Edinburgh* can be. Malignant criticism no longer baits its author, great or small. Modern critics are mindful that :—

We must not quarrel for a blot or two ;  
But pardon, equally to books or men,  
The slips of human nature and the pen.

That is Byron in his milk and honey mood, and embodies an admirable working philosophy. Without it, the production of books becomes costly and bothersome, only commendable after the fine manner of Cardinal Perron, a learned prelate of astute critical insight. When he had a book in the press, it was his habit to send an advance proof to the critics, and invite them to make observations on wide margins provided for the purpose. He was thus enabled to publish his book after the critics had done with it ; and it would seem that a great diplomat was lost when he entered the church.

His plan manœuvred him clear of those serious differences between critics and authors which are always deplorable, if only because of the impotence of an author when a critic has to be faced in deadly earnest. Twelve paces did they step off when Dr. William Maginn, critic, stood up to be shot at by the Hon. Grantley Berkeley, umbraged author. The pistols cracked, the bullets pinged, and—the author missed his man ! I abhor the insinuation that he might have hit him with a silver bullet ; preferring to allow that the critic had greater need of such occult ammunition—for he also missed his man ! Very probably, however, the critic missed on purpose, firing into the air out of sheer pity. Depend on it, if there was any bungling in the affair, the author was at fault.

The selling of old books is more than a trade or business ; there is something about it which suggests the guilds of the Middle Ages, demanding music with sackbut in it as you examine treasure, call it not stock, and con some item choicely rare, which seems to say :—

I am part of all the past ;  
 I knew the Georges, first and last ;  
 I have been oft where else was none  
 Save the great wig of Addison ;  
 And seen on shelves beneath me grope  
 The little eager form of Pope  
 I lost the third that own'd me when  
 The Frenchmen fled at Dettingen ;  
 The year James Wolfe surpris'd Quebec  
 The fourth in hunting broke his neck ;  
 The fifth one found me in Cheapside  
 The day that William Hogarth dy'd.  
 This was a scholar, one of those  
 Whose Greek is sounder than their hose ;  
 He lov'd old books and nappy ale,  
 So lived at Streatham, next to Thrale.  
 'Twas there this stain of grease I boast  
 Was made by Dr. Johnson's toast.

Amid such thoughts, such memories, you feel that to buy is a privilege; to haggle, sacrilege ; and you depart with another of the few bargains there are left on the old book market. No collector has ever been known to buy anything else. It is part of the ritual of the initiated. In time, when you

have got together your first thousand or so of old books, each and every one a tribute to your astute discernment, you begin to realize what a mysterious mart you are interested in, and how cryptic its sources of supply must be.

Some light is shed on this by an old tract in my collection, entitled—*Observations, Both Historical and Moral upon the Burning of London*, September, 1666. With an Account of the Losses. And a most remarkable Parallel between London and Moscow, both as to the Plague and Fire. Also an Essay touching the Easterly Wind. Written by Way of Narrative, for Satisfaction of the present and future Ages. By Rege Sincera, London, 1667. Writing with the charred embers of London around him, our author relates :—

“As for books, the booksellers, who dwelled for the most part round about the cathedral church (St. Pauls), had sheltered their books in a subterranean church under the cathedral, called St. Faith's, which was propped up with so strong an arch and massy pillars, that it seemed impossible the fire could do any harm to it; but, the fire having crept in through the windows, it seized upon the pews, and did so try and examine the arch and pillars, by sucking the moisture of the mortar that bound the stones together, that it was calcined into sand: So that, when the top of the cathedral fell upon it, it beat it flat, and set all things in an irremediable flame. I have heard judicious men of that trade affirm, that the only loss of books in that place, and Stationers-hall, publick libraries, and private persons houses, could amount to no less than 150,000 pounds.”

Old bookselling was founded, as an extensive business, on this identical calamity. The volumes

that escaped the Fire of London stocked the trade for very many years, and are still to be met with at fabulous prices. More of them have been sold to America alone than all London contained in 1666, or for years after. Where they came from no man knoweth ; nor is it fit that inquiry should be of disconcerting intensity. There is much pleasant make-believe in certain aspects of old book-buying.

Your true old book-buyer, born with the knack of it, sets out to pick up such alluring rarities as *Paradise—The Situation of Paradise found out*, London, 1683, and makes himself happy with Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, because "the copy could not be missed at the price." In a minor way, the things I have done in this direction surpass the shameless. Ere now, I have explored the Charing Cross Road, questing for sundry bound volumes of the *Strand Magazine*, having a vague notion of collecting Sherlock Holmes in serial original ; and have returned in brazen triumph with the *Recreative Review*, which began in 1821, and was edited with a gay disregard of the blue-pencil which would shock the *Odd Moments* of H. Greenhough Smith.

A delightful book, that same *Odd Moments*, but I do wish the back title would wander the other way round—I protest it dismays me to stack my books as a builder mortars rubble into a wall. The experience of a lifetime has taught me to treat my books

with a dignity I never depart from—loving them, I leave my books to arrange themselves, and they seem to manage quite nicely together. When I have done with a book for the time being, I am most careful to put it precisely where there happens to be room for it at the moment. The general effect is a gladsome creation I revel in, and love to rummage among, having this unique and distinctive feature. Commonly, books are arranged with the idea of finding the one volume you want—my plan is always likely to produce two copies, one I knew I “had somewhere,” the other, a forgotten duplicate.

Were I a bookseller, this would not do. It would then be essential to be business-like, the last refuge of a literary person. My stock of books would have to be paraded in tempting array, when I know I should bestow wilting words on folk who turned my wares over without buying any, reminding them tartly that my shop had no connection with Carnegie or any other business of the same name. The habit of sampling many books and buying none is own brother to original sin. It spurred Tom Dekker into this stinging rebuke of a book-taster who spent nothing: “You stand sometimes at a Stationer’s stal, looking scruily (like Mules champing vpon Thistles) on the face of a new Booke be it neuer so worthy: & goe (as il fauouredly) mewing away.” This was written in 1606; discursive conning,

graced by an occasional purchase, is encouraged by the booksellers of to-day. Such is the serene amenity of their dealing that you may, at most reasonable expenditure, spend a delightful hour or so in looking at new books, many of which you covet, and are likely to covet, others you buy. Your browsing must be light and passing, hard reading is not playing the game.

Booksellers, let it be known, were enterprising enough to publish the first advertisement that ever appeared in any British newspaper. This came out in the *Perfect Occurrences of Every Dais iournall in Parliament and other Moderate Intelligence*, April 2, 1647. It reads :—

“ A Book applauded by the Clergy of *England*, called, *The Divine Right of Church Government*, collected by sundry eminent Ministers in the Citie of London ; corrected and augmented in many places, with a briefe Reply to certain *Queries* against the Ministry of *England*, Is printed and published for *Joseph Hunsco*t and *George Calvert*, and are to be sold at the Stationers Hall, and at the Golden Fleece in the old Change.”

In the more astute art of drawing immediate attention to *the* selling point in a book, Curll was an old adept whose best work has a distinctive touch which the moderns seem to lack. Advertising in 1712, he displays this masterpiece :—

“ By Edmund Curll, Bookseller, at his Shop on the Walk at Tunbridge Wells. Gentlemen and Ladies may be furnish'd with all the



new Books and Pamphlets that come out ; Also French and Italian Prints, Maps &c. Where may be had Mr. Rowe's Translation of *Callipædia, or, the Art of getting Beautiful Children*. A Poem in 4 books. Price 4s. The Royal Paper, 7s. 6d."

Curll cannot be accused of advertising more than is to be found *in* the book, but—but—*all* I see on the title-page of my copy is *Callipædia. A Poem. In four books. Written in Latin by Claudius Quillet, Made English by N. Rowe Esq.* Curll, clearly, was ahead of his day, commercially anticipative of that sort of translation or imitation which appeared in 1768, entitled *The Joys of Hymen ; or, the conjugal Directory*.

Such a practice is enough to invoke rebuke from the pulpit. For all I know, sermons may have been preached against booksellers; it is a mighty poor business that has had no sermon launched against it at some time or another. But, Sterne excepted, it is enough for me to feel my sermons without reading them ; I know them so well that I can find them in the dark. They belong to the Cromwellian portion of my library ; where, should my fingers touch some slim item, a meagre scrap of dingy print in half-binding, I know it to be an account of a fight, in which, maybe, "the King himself very hardly escaped." Should I grope and pick up something a dozen times as bulky ; it is a sermon of thanksgiving for that same battle. Having studied sermons with such lack of insight,

It is not surprising that I cannot trace one against booksellers. But I can tell of a far greater danger, of something which threatened to end bookselling for all time.

The peril was insidious, created by one "W. P.," afterwards Sir William Petty, whose effigy should be pilloried in Stationers' Hall. He was a bad man, who plotted to destroy bookselling with much craftiness. The subtlety of his scheme is evidenced in *The Advice of W. P. to Mr. Samuel Hartlib, for the Advancement of Some Particular Parts of Learning*, London, 1648. This tract expands to thirty-four quarto pages, but the infamous gist of it lies in the proposal to condense all books into "one book, or great work, though consisting of many volumes." Imagine books thus regimented in slavish squads, each volume numbered like a bound convict, its contents rationed to a comma. Bookselling could never have survived such cutting back of the vital tendrils of an ever spreading business; it would have degenerated into the callous marketing of books by the yard, as actually happened in Russia, in the time of Catherine. History does not tell by what means the machinations of "W. P." were brought to nought. The emergency was grave enough for a patron saint to have intervened; but it does not appear that booksellers have one to themselves, minute research having established the curious fact that one

patron saint is common to booksellers, publishers, printers, authors, and lawyers. Authors, it seems, are eternally content :—

Here lies poor Ned Purdon, from misery freed,  
Who long was a bookseller's hack,  
He led such a damnable life in this world,  
I don't think he'll ever come back.

## CHAPTER TEN

### *A Bottle at the Club*

ONE of the minor arts of life is to make discerning display of such distinguished company as your club may connect you with, however distantly.

With a similar regard for the best of appearances, I open this chapter in the impeccable company of Archbishop Trench, who observes:—"It is singularly characteristic of the social and political life of England, as distinguished from that of other European nations, that to it alone the word 'club' belongs; the French and German languages having been alike unable to grow a word of their own as its equivalent, being obliged to borrow from us its designation. And no wonder; for these voluntary associations of men for the furthering of such social or political ends as are near to the hearts of the associates could only have their rise under such favourable circumstances as ours. In no country where there was not extreme personal freedom could they have sprung up; and as little in any where they did not know how to use this freedom with moderation

and self-restraint, could they have been endured.”

Trench *must* have been a member of the Athenæum in his day ; not that I am sure about it ; but the contrary is unthinkable. The wise old club stands four square for the ideal his words convey, having traditions worthy of all he wrote, and more. It is the only club in London vouched for by an unsolicited testimonial from the police, which reads :—“ From an account I have of the expenses of the Athenæum in the year 1832, it appears that seventeen thousand three hundred and twenty-three dinners cost, on an average, two shillings and ninepence three farthings each, and that the average quantity of wine for each person was a small fraction more than half a pint. Many people drink no wine, some only one glass ; *and excess, or even anything approaching to it, may be said to be unknown.*” This essay in the exquisitely good was penned by Thomas Walker, one of the police magistrates of the Metropolis. The italics are mine, being the least I could contribute to the majesty of the theme. Sidney Smith wrote to Walker, “ I wish you all the success of the *Spectator*, *Tatler*, and the *Guardian* ”—he deserved it.

Scholarly research has extended itself to decide whether Sir Walter Raleigh founded the Mermaid Club, or whether Chaucer sat at “ the dyner arraye ” mentioned by the poet Occleve ; but it has missed a hint in Ingulph of an older origin of the first of

our clubs. In his *History of the Abbey of Crowland*, he chronicles this event in the year 1091 :—

“Wulsin, the barber, who coming before our community in public parliament, made oath that he would be true and faithful to us, and would diligently perform his duties as hitherto he had done. On this occasion, we read over to him what were his duties, which were as follow. He was to shave the whole community, each in his proper order, without any regard for persons, unless perchance any one of the more aged should choose of his own accord to wait until after a younger one.”

The word “parliament” appeals to me in this reference. We allow the House of Commons to be “the best club in London”; we see parliament co-opting its club barber in the eleventh century; all we need is a Darwin to place this link in the evolution of clubdom in its proper order. Meanwhile, leaving research to its fusty self, we may be more than proud if the first of our clubs *was* the Mermaid, where, says Fuller in his *Worthies* :—

“Many were the wit-combats between Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. I beheld them like a Spanish great galleon, and an English man-of-war. Master Jonson, like the former, was built far higher in learning, solid, but slow in his performances; Shakespeare, like the latter, less in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his wit and invention.”

Yes, yes, but, oh! for an hour of Boswell there.

So far, with the help of an archbishop, an abbot, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson—and a police magistrate,

we have made a remarkably fine creation of the origin and growth of clubs. Stepping back to judge the effect of the halo ; we may bring this into the picture—" The club-room is before us, and the table, on which stands the omelet for Nugent, and the lemons for Johnson. There are assembled those heads which live for ever on the canvas of Reynolds. There are the spectacles of Burke, and the tall thin form of Langton ; the courtly sneer of Beauclerk, and the beaming smile of Garrick ; Gibbon tapping his snuff-box, and Sir Joshua with his trumpet in his ear. In the foreground is that strange figure which is as familiar to us as the figures of those among whom we have been brought up—the gigantic body, the huge massy face, seamed with the scars of disease ; the brown coat, the black worsted stockings, the grey wig, with the scorched foretop ; the dirty hands, the nails bitten and pared to the quick. We see the eyes and nose moving with convulsive twitches ; we see the heavy form rolling ; we hear it puffing ; and then comes the ' Why, sir ! ' and the ' What then, sir ? ' and the ' No, sir ! ' and the ' You don't see your way through the question, sir ! ' "

It is an appropriate step from such company to the Book Clubs, with the Roxburghe at their head. The object of these clubs is described by Scott in a letter to Robert Pitcairn. " I have long thought that something of a bibliomaniacal society might be

formed here, for the prosecution of the important task of publishing *dilettante* editions of our national literary curiosities. Several persons of rank would willingly become members, and there are enough of good operatives." The formation of the Bannatyne Club followed, and Scott wrote this festival ode for use when the club was in dining and wining mood :—

John Pinkerton next, and I'm truly concerned  
 I can't call that worthy so candid as learned :  
 He railed at the plaid, and blasphemed the claymore,  
 And set Scots by the ears in his one volume more.  
     One volume more, my friends, one volume more—  
     Celt and Scot shall be pleased with one volume more.

Write me down as a Sassenach who is pleased with one of the many volumes of Pinkerton ; his *Medallic History of England to the Revolution*, London, 1790, quarto. This is a book to idle upon ; its forty pages of plates invite the leisure of a library hour, and Pinkerton's comments show pith of reading, taking us beyond the strictly numismatic, as we see in this observation on a gold medal of Henry VIII, struck in 1545. " Mr. Evelyn remarks, that in this medal Henry appears with his usual bonnet, furred gown, and invaluable collar of rubies, during the civil commotions under Charles I disposed of abroad, to procure the Royal Family bread." At home, on the other side of the civil strife, disposal of the never-



to-be-replaced was even more ruthless. On the 9th of August, 1649, it was ordered "that those gentlemen who were appointed by this House to have the custody of the regalia, to deliver them over to the trustees for the sale of the goods of the late King, who are to cause the same to be totally broken, and that they melt down all the gold and silver, and sell the jewels to the best advantage of the Commonwealth." Among the treasures so consigned to the melting pot was "King Alfred's crowne of goulde wyerworke, sett with slight stones, and 2 little bells, p. oz.  $79\frac{1}{2}$  at £3 per oz." This vandalism was altogether too much for Carlyle, who passes it in a huff of silence in his *Cromwell*.

Another verse of Scott's ode introduces Ritson:—

As bitter as gall, and as sharp as a razor,  
 And feeding on herbs as a Nebuchadnezzar,  
 His diet too acid, his temper too sour,  
 Little Ritson came out with his two volumes more.  
 But one volume, my friends, one volume more—  
 We'll dine on roast beef, and print one volume more.

Roast beef? The prime dish of Old England—the bare mention of it was enough to bring the wraith of Ritson back to haunt Sir Walter into retraction. Ritson, for all his literary lore and learning, was a crank of varied eccentricities; a specialist in the peppery art of quarrelling with every

thing and everybody, a dabbler in spelling reform, and a vegetarian of such intensity that, to his sorrow, he confesses, "On one occasion, when tempted by wet, cold, and hunger in the south of Scotland, he ventured to eat a few potatoes dressed under the roast, nothing less repugnant to his feelings being to be had." Surely, "a little oatmeal" is most seemly with Ritson? Wonderful diet, that; the best possible for poetry; for prose that amounts to literature; and unequalled for high-brow criticism, as witness the "oat-fed phalanx" of Byron. Roast beef mingles with Ritson as roast pork might with Josephus—I wonder whether Lamb's fervour for crackling decided him to include the works of "the learned Jew" among his "books that are no books"?

The bill-of-fare enlarges into a pageant of high living at the Roxburghe, the premier book club, founded to commemorate the amazing auction price, in 1812, of £2,260, for a copy of the *Decameron*, printed by Valdarfer of Venice, in 1471. Haslewood, the tell-tale of the secrets of the exclusive Roxburghe, mentions turtle cooked in five different ways, tendrons of lamb, john dory, turbot, boiled chicken, and chartreuse, as incidental to the club menu, when the bill for dinner totalled £5 14s. per head. At this rate, the *Roxburghe Garland*, London, 1817, must have cost an oceanic price to float into the prosperity of an edition limited to the thirty-one

members of the club. The club caterer seems to have merited more lucrative patronage than the club publisher, which may explain why election to the Roxburghe was considered more difficult to obtain than the right of entry into Debrett itself.

After the Roxburghe, Ned Ward displays a waggish contrast in club life. Ward, an industrious retailer of ale and scurrility, tried his pen at many things ; from *The Life and Adventures of Don Quixote merry translated into Hudibrastick Verse*, to *Nuptial Dialogues and Debates*. He attempted to slander Milton in his tract, *The Secret History of The Calves' Head Club ; or the Republican Unmasked*, and is a coarse old scribbler for ready money down at his best, perhaps the most consistent plagiarist that ever debased an original ; in which connection he may be charged with pilfering the style of his *London Clubs* from old Tom Dekker. The subject, the low life Ward revelled in, is his own, and he handles it with familiar insight, meriting Campbell's comment ;—  
 “ His descriptions are humourous, curious, and full of life, and are worth preserving as delineations of the manners of his time.”

Ward's *Secret History of London Clubs*, 1709, is in two parts ; but the whole of it makes little more bulk than a tract and less than a sermon ; those Cromwellian sermons, I mean, of fifty-nine page calibre, as I see from a specimen “ preached to the

Honourable House of Commons, at their Solemne Fast." One of Ward's clubs is very like another, passing from bad to worse in their varied infamy, they do not invite a wide range of quotation. His "Beggar's Club," a lively item, shows Ward describing the mendicant fraternity with the intimacy of an old member, writing :—

"This Society of Old Bearded Hypocrites, Wooden-legg'd Implorers of Charity, Strolling Clapperdageons, Limping Dissemblers, Sham disabled Seamen, Blind Gunpowder-blasted Mumpers, & old broken Limb'd Labourers, hold their weekly Meetings at a famous Boozing Ken in the midst of Old St. where by the vertue of sound tippie, pretenders to the dark are restor'd instantly to sight, those afflicted with feigned sickness, recover perfect Health, and others that halt before they are Lame, stretch their Legs without their Crutches. When the Jovial Crew meet their dirty Handkerchiefs & Night Caps are slipt into their Pockets, their crippled Legs and Arms taken out of their Slings, & return'd from their cramping Postures to their Ease & Liberty ; where after they have soundly liquored their Paunches, they Sing this Song, which is called the Beggars new Ballad :—

Tho' Begging is an Honest Trade,  
That Wealthy Knaves despise,  
Yet rich Men may be Beggars made,  
& we that Beg may rise,  
The greatest King may be betray'd,  
& lose his Sovereign Power,  
But we that stoop to ask our Bread,  
Can never stoop much lower.

Let Heavy Taxes greater grow,  
To make our Army fight,  
Where 'tis not to be had you know  
The Queen must lose her Right.

## A BOTTLE AT THE CLUB

Let one side laugh, & t'other Moan,  
We nothing have to fear ;  
But that Great Lords should Beggars turn,  
To be as rich as we are.

Parting from the merry beggars, we fall into temptation which cajoles us still further from the Athenæum. We are lured to the Eccentric, the only club in London which has Bow Street on its battle honours. This unique distinction is as authentic as undeniable print can make it, and bears the added glory of dedication to Sir Francis Burdett. The stirring story, or most of it, is given in the title of an historic tract, which confers such fame on the Eccentrics that only a jealous Savage would delete a word of it. Here is the full text :—

*A Letter to James Read Esq., Principal Magistrate at the Public Office, Bow Street.* Containing strictures on the administration of the Police of this Metropolis, and on the Author's treatment when suing for justice at the above office, respecting riot, assault, and robbery, committed by several Members of the Society of Eccentrics. With an account of that Society—Anecdotes of the leading members, and a statement of the persecution of the Author since the publication of his Life and his engagement as a Public Orator at the British Forum. A comic description of his sham trial, fining, and expulsion, for printing the names of such of them as subscribed to his work, and a tragical detail of the riot which ensued and the assault and robbery committed on him previous to his leaving the room. By J. H. Prince, Author of numerous publications, member of several literary societies, &c.

*O Tempora ! O Mores.* London, 1808, Price two shillings.

After all that, it only remains to explain that Prince took the unwarrantable liberty of printing and publishing the names of his fellow members, in spite of his specific promise not to do so. When expelled, as he richly deserved to be, he showed some reluctance to depart, and was thereupon assisted off the premises. Seeking legal redress, the law brayed at him, so he sat him down and wrote a thirty-eight page tract about it.

*A Bottle Too Much*

THIS bottle is suggested to me by a book entitled *The Arts of Intoxication*, by the Rev. J. T. Crane. The title misleads, there is not a line in the book of the art we see in *Ebrietatis Encomium*; or, the Praise of Drunkenness, By Boniface Oinophilus, London, 1723. Instead of the joys his title hints at, our reverend author gives us a tract of bookish bulk, swelling a temperance homily to half-past two hundred pages octavo, bloating the thing, making it drunk with prolixity. His main fight is against alcohol, with side sparring against coca-leaf, thorn-apple, betel-nut, hemp, opium, and tobacco. He forgot tea and coffee—I have a rare old tract in which married ladies protest against the introduction of coffee for reasons no respectable man may repeat.

Among my eighteenth-century tracts, I have one against tea which amounts to literature—*A Letter to a Friend Concerning Tea*. Homo sum : Humani nihil à me alienum puto. By John Wesley, M.A., Fellow of *Lincoln-College*, Oxford. London, 1748. Curious, that Wesley should thus dignify a mere

tract with his full academical honours ; when, “ By the Rev. J. Wesley, M.A.,” sufficed for the New Testament, with his analysis of the several Books and Chapters, a work which anticipated, by a full century, many of the changes in the revised version. His anti-tea tract is as sincere as all else in his godly life. “ When I had spent a few months at Oxford,” he writes, “ having as I apprehended, an exceeding good Constitution, and being otherwise in Health, I was a little surprised at some Symptoms of a Paralytick Disorder. I could not imagine what should occasion that shaking of my Hand ; till I observed that it was always worst after Breakfast, and that if I intermitted drinking Tea for two or three Days, it did not shake at all.” Despite this, it was a long time before Wesley decided against tea, but at last he did so, to convert others from what he reasoned to be the wasteful and injurious habit of tea drinking, writing :—“ I must not plead an Exemption for myself, from a daily Practice of twenty-seven Years. I must begin. I did so, I left it off myself in August, 1746. And I have now had sufficient Time to try the Effects, which have fully answered my Expectation. My Paralytick Complaints are all gone : My Hand is as steady as it was at Fifteen : Although I must expect that, or other Weaknesses, soon ; as I decline into the Vale of Years.”

Not without a struggle did Wesley wean himself



from his cup of tea, stating :—“ When I first left off Tea, I was half asleep all Day long : My Head aked from Morning to Night : I could not remember a Question asked, even till I could return an Answer. But in a Week’s Time all these inconveniences were gone, and have never returned since.” This was written in 1748. About two years later, some time during 1750, the Commissioners of Excise were impertinent enough to suggest to Wesley that he had not made a full and complete return of all his taxable plate. His laconic reply was, “ I have two silver teaspoons at London, and two at Bristol ; this is all the plate which I have at present, and I shall not buy any more while so many around me want bread.” Why, having regard to the abjuring of tea, were those teaspoons so treasured ? Do we detect genial simmer of apostasy here ? It both cheers and inebriates to fancy Wesley, inspired by the heathen Kien Lung, busying himself to “ Set an old three-legged teapot over a slow fire ; fill it with water of melted snow ; boil it just as long as may turn fish white or lobsters red ; pour it on the leaves of choice, in a cup of youe. Let it stand until the vapour subsides into a thin mist, floating on the surface. Drink this precious liquor at your leisure, and thus drive away the five causes of sorrow.”

Never mind tea, we have had tracts against water drinking. Dr. William Lambe wrote *An Enquiry into*

*the Origin, Symptoms, and Cure of Constitutional Diseases*, in which he avows that water contains septic poison resembling arsenicated manganese, and calls it "the very demon, which, for so many ages, has tortured mankind ; and which, usurping the sensorium, has corrupted, under a thousand forms, both the mind and body ; the evil spirit which has augmented the wants of man, while it has diminished his enjoyments, which has exasperated his passions, inflamed the appetites, benumbed the senses, and enfeebled the understanding, which has converted his fine form into a storehouse of diseases, has blasted the flower of his offspring, and has brought even the strongest of his name to an untimely grave." Like a good soul, he blames the evil effects of punch to the water in it.

As Wesley's tract was often reprinted, the surmise of apostasy is very slight. But it does not seem that his crusade against tea ever made appreciable headway, and, most assuredly, it left no mark on our national habits. That was done by the movement against alcoholic intemperance, which began as an organized crusade as recently as 1826 ; and, among other good works, provided me with the most delightful tract I possess. This was issued by the British and Foreign Temperance Society, and contains the joyful exhortation, "Take what *Beer* you really want in your own family ; and share it

with your wife, who toils for your children." The tract is a single, undated leaf, but I allow that it must be approaching its century; as

"in the month of September, 1833, Richard Turner (known as 'Dicky Turner') was addressing a temperance meeting in the old Cockpit at Preston; and wishing to give emphatic utterance to the necessity of totally and absolutely getting rid of all strong drinks (and not of spirits only, as was the aim of the first temperance societies), he came out with the word 'Teetotal.' One who was present says, 'Its sound was like magic upon the audience, who loudly cheered.' And henceforward the movement against all alcoholic liquors was spoken of as 'Teetotalism,' and its professors as 'Teetotalers.'" —*Dawson Burns.*

My tract is of excessive rarity; it pleases me to believe it to be the only temperance tract in the world which commends the foaming tankard. I replace it tenderly, in Borrow, marking the passage. "Oh, genial and gladdening is the power of good ale, the true and proper drink of Englishmen. He is not deserving of the name of Englishman who speaketh against ale." Publicans cannot buy my tract, though several have made offers; among the sinners, only G. K. Chesterton would be worthy.

Truth to tell, and to inflict autobiography, it is singular in me to belaud good ale. It would more befit me to attempt those *Confessions of a Water-drinker*, which Lamb unaccountably delayed, to begin, for I am a hydrophil, never having tasted alcohol in my life. But I love the sweet wine of

tolerance, and take pride in collecting books on mixed drinks, such as are mentioned in Chamberlayne's *Present State of England*, 1671, which states, "since the late Rebellion, England hath abounded in variety of drinks (as it did before in variety of religions)." I have a practical book on these old drinks, it is *Every Man His Own Brewer*; or a Compendium of the English Brewery. Containing the Best Instructions for the Choice of Hops, Malt, and Water; and for the Right Management of the Brewing Materials. Likewise, the Most Approved Methods of Brewing London Porter and Ale. Of Brewing Amber, Burton, Western and Oat Ales. Of Good Table Beer, and Marlborough, Dorchester, Nottingham, and Bristol Beers. By a Gentleman lately retired from the Brewing Business, London, 1768.

There is smack of sound liquor in all this, and the book is so honest that I surmise its writer retired bankrupt and turned author. As a brewer, he drank his two quarts of beer before noon, and owned himself the better man for it. Such fine and early drinking entitles him to a niche in history, linking him with "our right dere and welbiloveded the Lady Lucy," of Henry VIII, who had "at brekefast oon chyne of beyf," with "oon chete loff and oon manchet" to flank it, and "a Galon of Ale" to wash it down. What a breakfast! yet, as the brush of

Holbein shows, such fare gave beauty to dainty dames, who had complexions suffused with the pink and white of June roses. And, by every law of ancient and goodly inheritance, the gift the brown ale gave still charms us.

Tea, introduced to us about 1637, is an upstart. Coffee, a mere novelty of but 1650, when Jacob opened his coffee-house at the Angel. We neither had nor wanted them :—

When good Queen Elizabeth sat on the throne  
Ere coffee and tea, and such slip-slops were known ;

True, and it seems to have been a rule of “no beer, no Queen ” with her. An old account of the reception of Queen Elizabeth at Cambridge states that she left a day earlier than she wished, and that “if provision of beer and ale could have been made, her grace would have remained.”

Ale is so maturely old with us that the Saxons called October *ael-monat*, or *ael-menath*, the month for the brewing of ale, and ale-houses are mentioned in the laws of Ina, King of Wessex. Ale was blessed in these lines, by John Still, Bishop of Bath and Wells, 1575 :—

I cannot eat but little meat ; my stomach is not good ;  
But, sure, I think that I can drink with him that wears a hood !  
Though I go bare ; take ye no care, I nothing am acold !  
I stuff my skin so full within of jolly good ale and old.

Back and side go bare ! go bare !  
 Both foot and hand go cold !  
 But belly, God send thee good ale enough ;  
 Whether it be new or old !

Ale is so soaked into our national and natural history, that, allowing for the influence of atavism on the *genus homo*, we have but to think back awhile, to see that the glorious complexions of British women must tempt in our day by reason of an ancestry of ten parts ale to one of tea and coffee. And, by all that sailed in the *Mayflower*, the same is true of American beauties. "Thus, on the theory of descent with modification," as Darwin has it, American complexions are consuming their inherited reserve of natural bloom at a fearful rate, with no replenishment permissible, a state of affairs which has only to be indicated to be ended. Strange, that I, a chronic case of non-alcoholism, should be fated to deal a blow so deadly that prohibition may not survive. No new thing, the life and death of prohibition—it is all recorded in the old song :—

SIR JOHN BARLEYCORN

A pleasant new Ballad, to sing both even and morn,  
 Of the bloody Murder of Sir John Barleycorn.

Whose name was Sir John Barleycorn  
 He dwelt down in a dale ;  
 Who had a kinsman dwelt him nigh  
 They called him, Thomas Good-Ale.

A BOTTLE TOO MUCH

Some said " Kill him ! " ; some said, " Drown ! "

Others wished to hang him high !

" For as many as follow Barleycorn,  
Shall surely beggars die ! "

Some brought jacks upon their backs,

Some brought bill and bow,

And every man, his weapon had,  
Barleycorn to overthrow !

When Sir John Good-Ale heard of this,

He came with mickle might,

And there, he took their tongues away,  
Their legs, or else their sight !

Some lay groaning by the walls ;

Some in the streets downright.

The best of them did scarcely know  
What they had done o'er-night.

All you good wives, that brew good ale,

God turn you from all teen !

But if you put too much water in ;  
The Devil put out your eyne !

Wine, I find, makes my books wobble. My library is steady on beer and ale, recording malt liquor from the Druids to the Georges as part of the nature of things British, commending the same as a wholesome beverage for life, fit companion to the staff of it. Wine never seems to know its own mind for two books together. Sometimes, its sallies glow with eloquence and wit ; sometimes, they flush with red anger. But this, the effect of wine, compels

digression from Noah to Pussyfoot, and threatens to fill a hogshead of a chapter. My subject keeps me in England, the only country in the world which produces wine of the vintage I want, of quality so aloof that but one bottle is too much.

By dragging me back to the time of the Romans, you may argue that drinkable wine was made in Britain. But I cannot allow that the Romans were entitled to pass an opinion on wine which posterity need notice. They mixed sea-water with their wine before drinking it, which they thought improved its flavour. To add to the horror, their wine was boiled before the saline mingling. Men of such palate, avowed jumlbers of the cruet and the wine-list, must not influence our judgment, or we shall be enticed towards mustard with sloe-gin. We may give more attention to Sir Edward Barry, whose *Wines of the Ancients*, 1775, mentions an experiment made by Mr. Hamilton, his friend, at Painshill, proving that good wine has and can be made in England, and that such wine has been sold at from seven and sixpence to ten and sixpence a bottle.

This is perfectly comprehensible to me. The secret lies in the making, as was revealed to me by a jolly yeoman farmer in Kent. His family recipe for black-currant wine, as made in his old farm for a hundred years at least, was so to sugar and ferment the fruit, that a goodly spirit arose to bless the buxom



Kentish women, as they worked at fragrant processes handed down from mother to daughter. The liquor thus produced, richer than many a port, was fortified by more than a dash of the best of brandy, matured in old sherry casks, bottled to the hour, and stored in a cellar ample and cool. Then, years old, it was brought out as "home-made wine," and handed round as "teetotal drink," being actually a liqueur of fine quality; of aroma which floated from oak-beamed dining-room out into the hall, and of strength which sufficed to set the hardest of heads nodding after dinner. Such British wine, I grant, may be accounted a success, even a national triumph.

We cannot allow as much to the wine mentioned by Pennant in his *Account of London*, 1791, where he tells us :—

"Notwithstanding the climate of *Great Britain* has, at least of late years, been unfavourable to the production of wines: yet, in the year 1635, we began to make some from the raisins or dried grapes of *Spain* and *Portugal*. *Francis Chamberlayne* made the attempt, and obtained a patent for fourteen years, in which it is alleged that his wines would keep good during several years, and even in a voyage under the very line. The art was most successfully revived, several years ago, by *Mark Beaufoy*, and the foreign wines most admirably mimicked. . . . We have skilful fabricators, who kindly supply our wants. It has been estimated that half of the port, and five-sixths of the white wines consumed in our capital, have been the produce of our home wine-presses."

Sad reading this, in 1751, "Ladies are creation's

glory," says Doctor Middleton. "But they are an anti-climax following a wine of a century old." And raisin wine, masquerading as port, is much worse than any conceivable anti-climax; it amounts to bottled piracy. We will turn from it with a shudder, step back a century or more clear of it, and see how British wine is dealt with in *The Mysterie of Vintners*, the same being a "brief discourse delivered to the Royal Society, assembled in Gresham-Colledge, on the 26 of November, 1662." Be it noted, this vinous oration has distinguished precedence in the deliberations of that learned society. Under date, August 4, 1662, Evelyn writes:—"Our Charter being now passed under the broad seale, constituting us a Corporation under the name of The Royal Society for the improvement of naturall knowledge by experiment, was this day read, and was all that was done this afternoone, being very large." As the "armes of the Society" were not decided upon until the 17th of the following month, and the first anniversary dinner was eaten on November 30th, 1663, "his Majesty sending us venison"; we see that the "mysterie" of the wine business was early broached to quench the thirst for "naturall knowledge."

The "mysterie" telleth of the vintners:—

"They take of *Brimstone* 4 ounces, of burn'd *Alum* 1 ounce, of *Aqua vitæ*, 2 ounces; these they put together in an earthern pan, or pipkin, and hold them over a Chaufing dish of glowing coals, till

the *Brimstone* is melted and runs, then they dipp therein a little piece of new *Canvas*, and instantly sprinkle thereon the powders of *Nutmeggs*, *Gloves*, *Coriandre* and *Anise* seeds. This canvas they fire, and let it burn out in the bung-hole, so as the fume may be received into the vessel. And this, as I have been credibly informed, is the best scent for all wines."

So much for the aromatic odour of the bouquet. As the "mysterie" unfolds, we read of strange doings by the vintners :—

"As for their metamorphosis of *White* into *Claret*, by dashing it with *Red*, nothing is more commonly either done or known.

"For their conversion of *White* into *Rhenish*; they have several artifices to effect it, among which this is the most usual.

"They take a hogshead of *Rochel* or *Cogniak*, or *Nants* White wine; rack it into a fresh Cask, strongly scented; then give the white *Parell*: put into it 8 or 10 gallons of clarified Honey, or 40 pounds of cours Sugar, and beating it well, leave it to clarify. To give this mixture the delicate *Flavour*, they sometimes add a Decoction of *Clary* seeds, or *Gallitricum*; of which Druggs there is an incredible quantity used yearly at *Dort*, where now is the *Staple* of *Rhenish* wines. And this is that Drink, wherewith our English *Ladies* are so much delighted, under the specious name of *Rhenish in the Must*.

"The manner of making adulterate *Bastard*, is this.

"*Recipe*, Four gallons of *White* wine, three gallons of old *Canary*, five pounds of *Bastard* Syrup, beat them well together; put them into a clean Rundlet, well scented; and give them time to fine."

There are many pages to the same effect, but there is no need to show more of nefarious practices long since a thing of the past; not a drop of wine of any kind is adulterated to-day, our concoctors manage without it, and it is of their chemical brew that I fill

my bottle too much. Such concoctors have my hate, abstainer as I am. Other men like good wine, sometimes sip a friendly glass in my library ; and, vicariously, I would have you to know that I am allowed to be a wonderful judge of port considering my disability.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### *A Parting Bottle Between Friends*

OUR parting bottle must be light, which means that the filling of it carries no credit. When an author writes as naturally as he might to the old folks at home, his work is allowed to be of "gossipy interest," never more, often less, be his thought and matter what they may. But if he digs up long words, and rolls them out for the sake of seeing how they look in print, he has "solid attributes"; his work "abounds in resonant and striking passages"; is "worthy of earnest attention," and may be "a classic of its kind," if enough to send a hungry man to sleep. Paraphrasing myself, I will explain. Instead of the familiar: "But if he digs up long words," I write: "But if he spends laborious and studious hours in the company of dictionaries and encyclopædias, comparing and weighing words of intellectual substance and literary force and dignity; conning ponderous tomes to present his thoughts in the perfection of appropriate language; ever seeking the one grandly comprehensive word which the technique of his style demands, or upon which mastery of

phraseology insists." Now, if I continued like that, nothing could stop me from being called an essayist of distinct promise ; I might even be accused of making a contribution to literature.

As it is, not being set on space-murder, my work is of "gossipy interest." This contents me well enough ; it suits me to write what I can without worry of words. Style, to my mind, is the valet of literature, born servant in the train of the great ones, but a sorry minion when conscripted, when forced to turn out something which looks mightily fine, but hides a poor coxcomb of thought beneath its fastidious trappings. Even a master must not press his style, or the impish varlet will mummify his meaning under a criss-cross plaiting of wordage. There is much truth in Wilde's epigram—"Only the real masters of style ever succeed in being obscure."

Apart from style, I find that my writing would be better if so many authors had not stolen my best thoughts before I began.

If e'er I say a thing that's good,  
Antiquity, in spiteful mood,  
Observes, " 'Twas I, my friend, who made it."  
Perhaps it was—but if the dame  
Had only waited till I came,  
Myself before her then had said it.

"All is said," writes La Bruyère, "and we come too late ; since it is more than seven thousand years

that so many men have reflected." There is nothing for it except to allow that plagiarism amounts to second literary nature. Few books worth reading are written without traceable digression from Shakespeare to Dickens. "Digressions, incontestably, are the sunshine,—they are the life, the soul of reading :—take them out of this book, for instance, you might as well take the book along with them ;—one cold eternal winter would reign in every page of it."

It also contents me to know that my grammar has a past, and flaunts it saucily. Give me the idiom of the good red soil of this my country, and you may have all the English grammar ever foisted on the suffering intelligence of our children. Our grammar, supposed to be English, reeks of imported impertinence. Dry-as-dust pedants, puffed with conceit which ballooned them above plain language and straight meaning, dumped chunks of nonsense into our schools, where, known as grammar, it remains to annoy successive generations with the insolence of lettered ignorance.

"When men began to study the English language, and to seek and treat of its grammatical rules, they lay under a prejudice which had grown up with the Latinists, and which, unfortunately, had not died with them, and, forgetting that English was a language in itself, they took it for granted that its grammar was merely an English edition of Latin grammar, and when they found that the English forms as they existed did not agree with the rules of Latin grammar, they attempted to force them into concordance. This mistake has spoilt all the English grammars . . . our grammarians and lexicographers

have, during the last two centuries, been labouring in their ignorance to reject from the English language some of its purest and best phraseology.”—*Thomas Wright*, M.A., F.S.A.

“Alas for the poor children who are doomed to be tormented out of their mother tongue by these Grammar-makers !” exclaims the learned Richard Taylor, in his editorial notes on Horne Tooke. His outburst does credit to his fine scholarship. The pundits of grammar would be intolerable did not the noose of their own setting swing them up, exposing them as concoctors of a rigmarole beyond all human understanding, even their own. Here is an example—“The more important rules, definitions, and observations, and which are therefore the most proper to be committed to memory,” is culled from the introduction to the first edition of a grammar of acknowledged notoriety, by one Lindley Murray, of Holdgate, near York, in 1795, a gentleman of American birth, some time a lawyer in Pennsylvania, and author of sundry theological effusions now forgotten. The extract I quote from his writing is a constant marvel to me, “and which” leaves me wondering how best to memorize the “*most proper*” of the “*more important.*” There would seem to be some superlative of solecism here ; not that it matters—it is only worth noting for the joy of beholding Lindley Murray buzzing on the sticky paper of his own word-trap.



Lindley Murray also parades stiffly some twenty "rules" of punctuation. What for? Punctuation is as personal as the use of pepper and salt. An author sprinkles his work with stops to help the flavour he desires to impart. "Writing, when properly managed (as you may be sure I think mine is), is but a different name for conversation," says Sterne, and who but Lindley Murray would punctuate his talk to the tune of a score or so of "rules"?

Enough of Lindley Murray, he is making our bottle dry before we have scarce begun it. Still, things might be worse, over this, our parting bottle; I might ask you to sigh with me in sad contemplation of *The Crypt*, or Receptacle for Things Past, Winchester, 1829. But my whim is to part in merry mood, jovial as the princely abbot of Bury, and Scogan, the king's fool, when :—

They'd haunch and ham; they'd cheek and chine;  
 They'd cream and custard, peach and pine.  
 And they gurgled their throats with right good wine,  
     Till the Abbot his nose grew red.  
 No *De Profundis* there they sang,  
 But a roystering catch to the rafters rang;  
 And the bell for matins, it went "ting tang,"  
     Ere the last of them rolled to bed.

Those were the days when fools *were* fools. Our prosaic age is bereft of a court jester in the royal household; a pity, the appointment, even as a

sinecure, would be *so* much better than the Chiltern Hundreds. The professional qualification need not be unduly exacting, as we see in Scogan, court buffoon to our Edward IV, whose jests were collected by Andrew Borde, and reveal that Scogan was a dull and dirty rascal in his rollicking days and nights. Mostly, he is unprintable, but there is nothing to incite the censor in—*How Scogan Made the Country-People of Normandy Offer Money to A Dead Man's Head*. Scogan begins by relating how he was cunning enough to impose a common skull on the good folk as a holy relic. “When the people came to offer to it, Scogan said unto them : ‘All you women that have been faithless to your husbands, I pray you to sit still, and come not to offer, for the head bade me that I should not receive your offerings.’ Whereupon, the poor men and their wives came thick and threefold to this offering ; and there was not a woman but she offered liberally.”

We allow that the poor men had much to be thankful for, but prenuptial gratitude may be even more sincere, as we are reminded by Mrs. Eliza Haywood, who, in 1775, edited the *Female Spectator*, and graced her pages with this truly consoling story, concerning a young gentleman

“who was passionately in love with a very beautiful young lady, and behaved himself in the most extravagant manner on his rival being preferred. All his acquaintance trembled, lest some act of desperation

should ensue ; and, it is much to be feared, they would not have been mistaken, if, in two or three days after the loss of all his hopes on her account, he had not providentially discovered she had been made a mother two years before, by one of the helpers in the stable."

The hussy ! Such depravity in "a beautiful young lady" is enough to make us fly from the very world she lived in. There appear to be possibilities in that direction which have yet to be explored. Considering the many people who either want to get off the earth, or look like being pushed off it, I feel that an old book of mine ought to be most helpful in these trying times. The title of this precious volume is *The Discovery of a New World* or, a Discourse tending to prove, that 'tis probable there may be another habitable World in the Moone. With a Discourse concerning the possibility of a Passage thither, London, 1640 ; the book is by Wilkins, Bishop of Chester, reckoned a good mechanist and mathematician in his day ; he is a leader of engineers in Swift's *Battle of the Books*. Since 1640, so our scientists inform us, we have learned so many things about the moon that a wireless talk by the man in it would not tell us much more than we know of his shining domain. This is well enough as far as it goes, but is open to the damaging criticism that human experience cannot be advanced to support it. We have yet to read of a voyage to the moon, outside the pages of Jules Verne and H. G. Wells, and while

THE  
FIRST BOOK.  
THE DISCOVERY  
OF A NEW  
WORLD.

O R,  
A Discourse tending to prove, that 'tis  
probable there may be another habitable  
World in the Moone.

With a Discourse concerning the possibility  
of a Passage thither.

---

The third impression. Corrected  
and enlarged.

---

*Quid tibi inquis ista proderunt? Si nihil aliud, hoc  
certè, sciam omnia hinc angusta esse. Seneca præf.  
ad 1. lib. Nat. Quæst.*

---

LONDON:  
Printed by JOHN NORTON for JOHN  
MAYNARD, and are to be sold at the  
George in Fleetstreet, neere St. Dunstons  
Church. 1640.

this is true, possibilities, both ancient and modern, must not be stifled by the cold hands of unemotional science. Until men travel there, and return with reports to the contrary, the possibility of a desirable residence in the moon remains to delight the imagination ; to inspire the hope of a better standard of life in that planet, whose beams have ever been friendly to humans levanting from landlords and other creditors.

Speaking seriously, and thinking imperially, the moon may yet compel some civilized nation to declare war on the Man in it. The demand for places in the sun exceeds the available supply. The moon offers a limitless field abounding in vacant places. The first nation to colonize the moon will control the tides, and natural light when the world most needs it. One selfish Old Man has no right to monopolize all this ; the time has arrived when he should be improved off the face of the moon, when the flag of some great nation should flutter on the topmost peak of its mountains. As becomes a true Briton. I hope we may salute the night when the face of the moon will glow with rosy red. We need the planet, if but for sweet sentiment :—

With how sad steps, O Moon ! thou climb'st the skies !  
 How silently, and with how wan a face !  
 What ! may it be, that even in heavenly place  
 That busy Archer his sharp arrows tries !  
 Sure, if thy long and love-acquainted eyes

Can judge of love, thou feel'st a lover's case !  
 I read it in thy looks ! Thy languished grace  
 To me, that feel the like, thy state describes !  
 Then, even of fellowship, O Moon ! tell me,  
 Are beauties there, as proud as here they be ?

Tempted by such poetry, well might lovers fly to the moon, but the practice should not be encouraged except for return trips. As a place of permanent abode, we need the moon as the one and only suitable habitation for those bothersome folk who do not find this world good enough for them, who breathe its air under protest, and tread its common clay as if they were above their beginning and end. A mixed contingent, these desirable moon-migrants, comprising minor poets, who print their verse privately ; film producers, who spin empty stories out of their inner nothingness ; reformers, who have a mission and a collecting-box, and sundry others who do nothing in particular except annoy people who work for their living.

These scattered individuals, however, are but pioneer colonists of moonish propensity. When mass-migration is considered, when whole classes are to be sent up, then we collect our agitators, our worriers and snarlers, our addicts of the " ists " and " isms " ; all those, in general, who have some " social system " they want to play fool tricks with. If we could pack these freaks off to the moon to manage

a little planet of their own, they could send us word to come and look when their world was perfect. Meanwhile, the poor old earth would be much relieved ; and the Man in the Moon cheered by the notes of the Red Flag, music dear to his heart—he composed it to set the moonbeams dancing while a mushroom-world grew better in a night.

All this imparts living interest to my lunar book, old as it is, and I turn its pages in quest of helpful hints towards solving our social problems. “ If wee consider the Moone as another habitable earth, then the appearance of it will be altogether exact and beautiful,” observes our author, “ and may argue to us that it is fully accomplished for all those ends to which Providence did appoint.” This makes a real friend of the moon, encouraging us with the assurance of something providential in its fitness for human habitation ; I thought it was no accident that the moon is so handy.

As to getting to the moon, that presents no difficulty, “ if a man were beyond this sphere, hee might stand as firmly in the open aire, as now upon the earth. And if he might stand there, why might he not also goe there ? ” Yes, of course, why not walk it ? People who tread on air every hour of their lives ought to manage this without any difficulty. A mass meeting in Hyde Park, followed by a combined march from Trafalgar Square to the moon, would

be a final triumph for the downtrodden masses, who now suffer under the iron heel of those who conjure them up, and parade them in podgy placidity on May-day. The police, I am assured on excellent authority, would have no objection whatever to this demonstration ; and the Man in the Moon would give fraternal greeting to his comrades at the end of their march.

For those who would rather not walk, there is this alternative, founded on ideas long since put into practical form. "That the aire is in some part of it navigable. And that upon this Staticke principle ; any brasse or iron vessell (suppose a kettle) whose substance is much heavier than that of the water, yet being filled with the lighter aire, it will swimme upon it, and not sinke. So suppose a cup, or wooden vessel, upon the outward borders of this elementary aire, the cavity of it being filled with fire, or rather æthereall aire, it must necessarily upon the same ground remaine swimming there, and of it selfe can no more fall, than an empty ship can sinke." Hot air, obviously, is all we want ; and I might name spouters who could be tapped to supply enough of it to lift a mob, and a big one, away up to the moon without the least trouble ; in fact, they commonly do it.

Hearing these mass-gassers shout "Get off our moon !" a sure sign they are really there, I return



to earth, to roam no more. We have finished our last bottle together this evening. Remember, it is "between friends," who, I hope, will like the flavour. Those who may pucker at it, will be very foolish to allow a little moonshine to upset them. After all, have I not been extremist enough to demand the scalp of Lindley Murray? Moscow has financed many a deed less terrible than that, which marks my present limit as an extremist. You will find hot-heads in every movement, but very few white-hot-heads. Most men harden into something solid as they grow older. When it comes to thinking about setting grandchildren a good example, I fancy the autocrat is best—the trouble is to decide which is the autocrat.













UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY  
Los Angeles

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

OCT 3 1947

DISCHARGE-URL

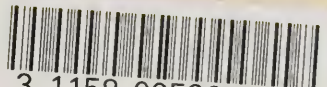
JAN 27 1981

Form L9-25m-8,'46 (9852)444

THE LIBRARY  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
LOS ANGELES



PR99  
C61b Clifford -  
1927 Books in  
bottles.



3 1158 00526 8908

*[Handwritten mark]*

*Sadie McManis*  
*staff*  
*JUL 5*

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



AA 000 293 750 6

PR99  
C61b  
1927

